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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

# NURTURANT FATHERING: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

BY

© ERIC CHARLES SUNDBY

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA,
FALL, 1991

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Eric Sundby

6618-172 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5T 3R5

Date: July 22, 1991.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled NURTURANT FATHERING: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES submitted by Eric C. Sundby in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

..............................
Dr. L. McDonald
(Supervisor)

J Mitchell
..............................
Dr. J.J. Mitchell

James Blakey
..............................
Dr. J. Blakey

Date: July 17, 1991

# DEDICATION

To Leslie, Ben, and Aly who are the chief architects of my desire to be a nurturant husband, father and friend.

To Lara Neukomm who, in her too short life, demonstrated the power and fruits of human nurturance.

# ABSTRACT

The influence of sociocultural factors upon the development and expression of nurturant fathering behaviors was investigated. Findings suggest that both indirect and direct father nurturance contribute to the cultivation of the psychosocial potentials of children. Also suggested was that the father's role is vulnerable to a variety of sociocultural factors, some of which act to impede the involvement of fathers in the nurturant care of their children. The father's role has been revealed to be particularly vulnerable to these factors because of the intimate relationship that exists between it and these structures and practices. This intimate relationship is a natural outcome of the father's traditional, peripheral orientation with regards to family maintenance. Distanced father involvement in the direct cultivation of child potentials is supported by many social, cultural, and institutional practices present in North American society. Primary amoung these practices are the enculturation of males and the supports available to fathers in both their immediate and wider sociocultural environments. Indications are that the sociocultural milieu requires that the father's role be flexible in order to accomodate to its demands.

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## Table of Contents

CHAPTER Page

I. INTRODUCTION....................................1

Background.........................................1
   Omission of Fathers.............................2
   Nurturant Fathering Defined.....................3
   Nurturant Fathering: History's Legacy...........4
   Social Change: The Present Dilemna..............6
   Early Views on the Needs of Infants.............7
   New Information About Infant Sophistication.....11
   Fathers: A Reconceptualization..................12
   Nurturant Capacities of Fathers.................13
Sociocultural Influences Upon Child Nurturance.....15
Nurturance and Human Growth and Development........17
Summary............................................19
Statement of the Problem...........................21
   Importance of the problem.......................21

II. NURTURANCE AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT...............22

Importance of a Responsive Social Environment......22
Nurturance Defined.................................24
Nurturance and the Cultivation of Human Potential..24
   Human Development and Nurturance................25
   Inherent Capacities.............................26
   Evidence of Inherent Capacities.................28
   Nurturance and the Attachment Relationship......30
   Consequences of Non-nurturance..................33
Current Social Trends..............................35
   The Changing Role of Women......................35
   Lack of Political Support.......................36
   The Clash of Research and Policy................37
   The Decline of Nurturant Sources to Children....39
Current State of the Family........................42
   Implications for Children.......................43
   Implications for Society........................44
The Nurturant Father...............................45
Summary............................................46

III. FATHER NURTURANCE: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE...49

Background.........................................49
   The Exclusion of Fathers........................49
   The Inclusion of Fathers........................50
Fathers and the Attachment Relationship............51
   Father Salience.................................51

Requirements of Attachment Figures................53
Benefits to Children..............................54
The Effects of Father Absence.......................55
The General Developmental Contributions of Fathers...57
Breadwinning.....................................57
Emotional Support................................58
Direct Interaction...............................59
The Specific Developmental Contributions of Fathers..60
Sex-Role Orientation.............................60
Cognitive Development............................64
Personal and Social Development..................67
Summary of the Literature Review....................73
Limiting Features of Previous Research..............75
Research Question...................................76

IV. ROOTS OF CONTEMPORARY FATHERHOOD...................77

Contemporary North American Fatherhood Defined.......78
Antecedents of Father Involvement...................79
Biological Influences............................79
Sociocultural Influences.........................84
Enculturation.................................84
Motivation....................................85
Skills and Confidence.........................86
Spousal Support...............................88
Institutional Influences......................89
Elements of Traditional Fatherhood..................90
Rejection of Old World Traditions................91
The democratic Milieu............................92
The Frontier.....................................92
Characteristics of the New World Father.............93
The Social Vulnerability of the Father's Role........94
Evidence of the Evolution of the Father's Role.......95
The Moral Teacher................................95
The Breadwinner..................................96
The Sex Role Model...............................97
The Nurturant Father.............................98
A Role in Flux......................................99
Summary............................................102

V. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPEDIMENTS TO NURTURANT FATHERING...............................................105

The Current Situation: Fathers Today................105
The Women's Movement.............................106
Impediments to Increased Father Involvement......107
The Socialization of Males....................108
The Socialization of Females..................109
A Lack of Supportive Programs for Fathers.....110
A Lack of Supportive Governmental and Employment Policies.........................111
The Social Vulnerability of the Father's Role....113

Sociocultural Influences Upon Human Behavior........117
    Socialization and Role Theory....................119
    Gender Role Identity.............................120
Sociocultural Influences on the Father's Role.......122
    Family Environment...............................123
    The Enculturation of Males.......................124
    Personal Characteristics.........................125
    Sex Role Ideology................................126
    Support of Spouse................................127
    Influences of Paid Work..........................127
    Degree of Community Support......................128
Summary.............................................129

VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.........................131

Limitations of the Study............................131
Social Factors and Father Salience..................131
Research Barriers...................................133
Sociocultural Influences............................134
    Developmental Implications.......................135
    Influential Sociocultural Factors................138
        Mothers......................................139
        Community Support............................140
        Social Policies..............................141
        Fathers......................................142
Directions for Future Research......................143
Summary.............................................145

REFERENCES..........................................147

# CHAPTER I

## Introduction and Background

Nurturant fathering is fathering behavior that cultivates the developmental potential of children. In western society and throughout most of the world's societies fathers, compared with mothers, play a minor role in the direct nurturance of their children. In North American society the father role has traditionally centered upon provisioning and protecting the family unit. To achieve these role functions fathers have had to be peripherally oriented. This peripheral focus has removed fathers, as a group, from the opportunity of being more directly involved in the rearing of their children. This peripheral focus of fathers seems to be sustained by a variety of sociocultural elements. These include the enculturation of both males and females, the influence of social structures, and institutional practices. The father's role seems to be highly influenced by, indeed vulnerable to, these aspects. In order to more deeply understand the father's role it is important to recognize the social forces that both influence and sustain its present, culturally dominant form.

The purposes of this chapter are to outline briefly the history of the investigation of child nurturance, to indicate that this investigation has been influenced by dominant sociocultural values and perspectives, and to provide background information pertinent to the issue of father nurturance.

## The Omission of Fathers

Until recently, fathers have been excluded from investigative efforts because of the belief that they were less important than mothers in influencing the development of their children. When father influence began to be investigated, many research paradigms were not sensitive to contextual or ecological relationships. This shortcoming becomes more obvious upon reviewing the findings generated by these early studies (Pedersen, 1976). These initial research efforts did, however, reveal the need for an approach that was sensitive to the sociocultural influences upon the development of children and did serve to suggest that fathers were (or could be) developmentally salient.

The development of child potentials is a multi-factored achievement involving the interaction of biological and social forces. Parents are chief social influences in the process of child development by virtue of the child's dependence upon them as caregivers, as a unit, and as mediators of the wider society and culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). That fathers initially received very little attention in child development research efforts can be viewed as a reflection of a societal devaluation or misunderstanding of the father's potential role in child development. It is also an example of how the questions of social science reflect sociocultural realities or contexts (Cohen, 1987; Pleck, 1979). A consequence of this was that most child-focused developmental research emphasized the mother-infant dyad and neglected the actual and potential contributions of fathers. The phenomenon of child nurturance was observed from the perspective of existing social practice and context, not from a child-focused perspective. To point out that there was an imbalance in this area would indicate that the status quo was deficient. There was a great reluctance, a conservative pressure, not to do so (Thomas, 1990).

The acknowledgement that cultural and social forces affect human development potentially can lead to the asking of more significant questions and to the "in context" interpretation of developmental data (Rogoff and Morelli, 1989). It can also lead to the critical examination of social values and practices that may adversely affect developing human beings. The following sections will define nurturant fathering and examine social and developmental information that bears witness to the potential developmental salience of fathers to their children.

## Nurturant Fathering Defined

Nurturant fathering will be defined, for the purposes of this study, as fathering behaviors that cultivate or foster the developmental potentials of children. This cultivation may have direct or indirect forms. Indirect nurturant fathering behaviors will be defined as behaviors that enable the cultivation of child potentials. An example of this type of father nurturance is breadwinning, which serves to enhance the material stability of the family unit and enables access to other social resources (Lamb, 1986). Direct nurturant fathering behaviors will be defined as those behaviors that take place within the father-infant dyad that serve to cultivate child potentials. For example, it has been shown that fathers have an important affect upon the psychosexual development of their children (Biller, 1982).

## Nurturant Fathering: History's Legacy

Father involvement in the care of children is not a new phenomenon. It is generally assumed that for most of human history, fathers had direct child-care responsibilities, sharing these with mothers or the larger family group. The conditions generated by our modern industrial and technological society have altered this resulting in both direct and indirect consequences for families and children. (Cotterell, 1986; Keniston, 1977; Russell, 1983; Zigler and Heller, 1984). These conditions include role expectations for men and women and the societal structures and supports for these expectations. These role expectations have engendered a view of fathers as developmental non-entities, as being biologically necessary but developmentally useless to their offspring (Bowlby, 1958; Mead, 1953). Bowlby reached this conclusion based upon his reasoning that fathers were not able to nurture because of their biological makeup. Mead based her evaluation upon observations of cultural forces and variations. One outcome of this view has been a neglect of investigation into the potential developmental contributions of fathers to their children. It is only recently that this situation has begun to be redressed. Recent research results suggest that fathers are capable of making significant contributions to the development of their children (Biller, 1982; Cohen, 1987; Lamb, 1986; Parke & Tinsley, 1984).

The emergence of nurturant fathering capacities seems to be largely a function of social and cultural influences that involve the enculturation and sex-role definition acquired by men in our society (Cohen, 1987; Day & Mackey, 1986; Novak, 1990; Yogman, 1983). This is not to deny the existence of a biological substrate to human fathering. Rather, it is to emphasize that social and cultural conditions seem to be highly influential in the final expression of the inherent capacities of men to nurture their young. Men have not been found to lack inherent nurturant capacities or the ability to attach to their children (Hipgrave, 1982; Lamb, 1986; Russell, 1983; Rypma, 1976). The observation that, as a group, men in our society do not nurture their young via direct child-care activities is not, then, the result of capacity deficits. Rather, a more likely explanation is that nurturant child-care by fathers is not a role expectation of men. This exclusion results in deficits in child-care skills and precludes men being initially effective in a nurturant, child-care capacity. This finding is the direct result of the historical expectations of men vis a vis their participation in nurturant child-rearing.

## Social Change-The Present Dilemna

This role deficit and consequent skill deficit dilemna is suddenly evident because men are being requested to take on an increasing share of child-care duties and find themselves lacking in required skills. The increased opportunity for men to become involved in child-care is a by-product of social changes that involve the role of women and the changing nature of the family. The role of fathers is, as a result, also in flux. Present demands on fathers for increased child-care involvement may not be supported by traditional expectations, training, or social structures. The traditional training of fathers leaves them, as a group, in need of the skills and the role identity that would enable an easy transition into the role of nurturant child-care.

The examination of the social forces influencing nurturant fathering takes on an added importance when taking into account that children in our society, as a group, have available to them a declining number of nurturant sources (Zigler and Heller, 1984). Recent epidemiologic data indicate that an increasing proportion of children are evidencing signs of emotional and psychological undernourishment (Levande, 1984; Zelizer, 1985). It might be hypothesized that not considering fathers as sources of nurturance to their children is an indication of a wider sociocultural neglect or ignorance of the needs of children for nurturing, and of policy and value outcomes that are counter-developmental (Zelizer, 1985; Zigler and Heller, 1984).

## Early Views on the Needs of Infants

Views about the sophistication of the human infant have changed rapidly since the turn of the century. In an early work in this area Chapin (1915) noted:

> In considering the best conditions for the relief of accutely sick infants and for foundlings or abandoned babies, two important factors must always be kept in mind: (1) the unusual susceptibility of the infant to its immediate environment, and (2) its great need of individual care. (p.1)

Chapin's statement regarding the needs of infants accurately foreshadowed the findings of observers that were to follow him. He made no speculation, however, about why the infant might be so dependent upon its immediate environments while concluding that "the best conditions for the infant thus require a home and a mother" (p. 1). This statement was in response to the observation by Chapin and others that many hospitalized infants succumbed to pneumonia and other lifethreatening conditions while in hospitals. Chapin hinted at a connection between the observed high mortality rates of hospitalized or institutionalized infants and the social sterility of their surroundings. The failure of researchers to view evidence from a developmental perspective led to hospital practices that further isolated infants from the very social environment that they required (Bakwin, 1942). Chapin's conclusion on this matter may have subsequently been resistant to serious developmental scrutiny by the strong behavioral zeitgeist that was emerging in North American psychology at the time. This paradigm considered the study of innate capacities, needs, or abilities "unscientific" and therefore unworthy of investigation.

William Blatz, working from the basis of his "security theory," noted that infants seemed to derive security from being in proximity to their parents, from what he called being in a state of "relatedness" (Blatz, 1966). His work is of particular interest because of the influence that it had on Mary Ainsworth, a student of John Bowlby and the chief formulator of the attachment relationship. The observation that infants sought the proximity of their mothers and derived benefits from this proximity set the stage for a fruitful area of research (Ainsworth, 1978). Fathers, however, were missing from this investigation of the attachment relationship. This seems to have been a result of the biologically based research paradigm which claimed monotrophy and which did not acknowledge the influence of ecological or sociocultural features upon the father's role (Parke, 1981). Lehrman (1974) acknowledges this shortcoming when he states: "we (scientists) have been guilty of concluding that our biological nature demands a sex role differentiation that is, in reality, justifying our social prejudices" (p. 194).

A wider, developmental understanding of the observation of high infant mortality in institutionalized populations (Bakwin, 1942; Spitz, 1945, 1946) allowed researchers to conclude that this mortality rate was due to a lowered resistance to disease caused by the child's organismic or "psychologic" response to sterile, unresponsive social conditions. Rene Spitz (1946) described the condition that stemmed from this response as "anaclitic depression." This condition describes a state typified by the following characteristics: delayed social and cognitive development, low body weight and size, a lowered resistance to disease, irritability and inconsolability, and a lack of responsiveness to physical and social environments (Spitz, 1946). Anaclitic depression was due, then, to the child's response to the sterile social conditions around them. Spitz (1945) termed these conditions "hospitalism." A major feature of hospitalism was the absence of a mother figure.

Spitz (1946) described the relationship between the child and their sterile social environment in the following way: "We believe that they suffer because their perceptual world is empty of human partners, that their isolation cuts them off from any stimulation from any persons who could signify mother representativeness for the child of this age" (p. 68). This statement points to the importance of a developmentally supportive environment, that is, an environment that nurtures or potentiates the capacities of the individual. The chief characteristic of such an environment was cited as being a nurturing, involved mother (Chapin, 1915; Spitz, 1946).

John Bowlby (1958) furthered the momentum generated by the work of Spitz (1945, 1946) when he emphasized the importance of the mother-infant bond. Bowlby echoed the sentiments of Margaret Mead (1953) that fathers were a "biological necessity" but developmentally unimportant to their children. He concentrated upon the dominant, observable relationship, that of the mother-infant dyad. Along with his student-colleague, Mary Ainsworth, he made some very important observations that led to the discovery of the attachment relationship. These early observations stimulated research into early infant attachment behaviors and capacities. Early attachment theory concentrated upon observing the behaviors exhibited by infants with varying degrees of attachment to their mothers and corresponding maternal behaviors (Ainsworth, 1978). Fathers were at best seen as peripherally involved and supportive of the mother-infant dyad. They were not considered to be attachment figures (Bowlby, 1958).

New Information About Infant Sophistication

Another area of research that is enabling a re-evaluation of the father's role in child development is the investigation of the early developmental capacities of newborns and infants (Emde, 1989; Greenspan, 1989; Izard, 1986; Tronick, 1982). This research builds on the findings of earlier investigators such as Bakwin (1942), Blatz (1929), and Spitz, (1945, 1946). The conclusion arrived at by these investigators was that anaclitic depression was the result of the neglect of essential organismic requirements for nurturant, responsive care. Researchers such as Edward Tronick, Robert Emde, Carol Izard, and Stanley Greenspan exemplify the attempt to better understand the complexity of the young child. Their efforts have confirmed and extended the findings of Bakwin (1942), Blatz (1929), and Spitz (1945, 1946) that support the contention that infants are highly dependent upon their immediate social environments.

Healthy infants are equipped to engage their immediate social environment through a variety of reflex, sensory, and behavioral modalities (Emde, 1989; Greenspan, 1989; Tronick, 1982). The development and integration of these inborn capacities is very much dependent upon the environment (Greenspan, 1989; Tronick, 1982). The child's social environment, central components of which are parents, is highly influential in the process of cultivating and integrating their capacities. Stanley Greenspan (1989) summarizes the findings of this new generation of infant researchers when he states:

> It is well documented that infants' spontaneous behavior is richly organized from birth and that this organization becomes progressively more complex during the first few years of life. The accumulated knowledge supporting this view has led to a radical change in the scientific conception of the infant from a conglomerate of isolated reflexes to an organism born with considerable pre-adaption to the social encounters that are an essential feature of the postnatal environment. (P. 503)

The infant, then, is organically prepared to engage its primary social environment (its parents) and is dependent upon the responsiveness of this environment for optimal development. Children and fathers are capable of attaching to each other but major pre-requisites are the physical and psychological availability of fathers as attachment figures to their children (Ainsworth, 1978; Lamb & Lamb, 1976; Tronick, 1982).

## Fathers: A Reconceptualization

The perception of fathers as unimportant in the attachment process seems to have been adopted by researchers of Bowlby's era, resulting in the continued absence of fathers from the realm of study. Regarding fathers as developmental nonentities reflects an absence of consideration of the influence of sociocultural factors upon the nurturant opportunities available to children. Remnants of this perception are still evident in current developmental literature and research (e.g., Isabella & Belsky, 1991).

This perception of the father is being gradually replaced by a view that acknowledges three salient features: the ability of children to attach to adults other than their mothers (Lamb & Lamb, 1976); the ability of fathers to attach to their infants (Greenberg and Morris, 1974; Meyer, 1986; Parke, 1978); and a growing acceptance and demand in our society for increased father involvement in direct child-care activities (Cohen, 1987; Lamb, 1986). Difficulties arise, however, when demand and expectations do not align themselves with supply realities. North American males are not generally enculturated to nurture via direct child-care activities (Cohen, 1987; Demos, 1982; Franklin, 1988; Pleck, 1987; Zigler and Heller, 1984) nor are existing social policies and structures supportive of nurturant child-care by fathers (Franklin, 1988; Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine, 1987).

## Nurturant Capacities of Fathers

The perception that fathers are developmentally unimportant to their children is being gradually replaced by a view of fathers as equipped with a variety of capacities that, if potentiated, enable them to cultivate the developmental potentials of their children. There has been a shift in the focus of research from an acknowledgement that fathers make contributions via providing economic support and discipline (Benson, 1968; Bowlby, 1951) to an earnest investigation of the ways and means whereby fathers cultivate their children (Biller, 1983; Lamb, 1986; Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine, 1985; Lynn, 1974; Nash, 1965). Fathers can attach to their infants (Fein, 1976; Greenberg and Morris, 1974; Lamb, 1986; Parke, 1978) and infant attachment to their fathers can be as strong as it is to mothers (Biller, 1979).

The growing evidence that fathers are capable of nurturing their young via direct child-care activities generates a very large question: If fathers have the capacities to nurture their children, and if father nurturance is in some ways unique from that of mothers, why aren't fathers nurturing on a larger scale? The answer seems to lie in the realm of social and cultural expectations for men vis a vis child-rearing and the consequent training and support available to them to engage in such behaviors. Also, social structures and the institutions predicated from them, tend not to support the development of father nurturance (Cohen, 1987; Franklin, 1988; Rogoff and Morelli, 1989).

### Sociocultural Influences Upon Child Nurturance

The child's dependence upon a responsive, initiating, and supportive social environment is now widely acknowledged (Emde, 1989; Greenspan, 1989; Spitz, 1946; Tronick, 1982). Children reared in situations that do not offer such supports are at risk socially and psychologically. An understanding of the social and cultural factors that influence developing children will help to shed light upon the challenges that they face in today's society. It is to consideration of some of these factors that this background overview now turns.

Recent findings by infant and child researchers have revealed that children are sophisticated and specifically equipped to engage their social environments (Greenspan, 1989; Tronick, 1982). As seen above, definite consequences accrue to infants who attempt to engage an unresponsive environment (Spitz, 1946; Tronick, 1982). This increased understanding of the developmental complexity of the human infant stands against a social backdrop that is in a state of flux. Indicators of this flux are the continuing erosion of the nuclear family via divorce and desertion (Wallerstein, 1989), a consequent increase in the number of single parent families, smaller family size, smaller and more remote family networks (Mitchell, 1987), an increased number of families in which both parents are breadwinning

(Keniston, 1977; Mitchell, 1987), and an increased number of children who are receiving surrogate care for large portions of the work week (Cooke, 1986).

Societal trends and changes correlate with social forces and values. The developmental consequences of these forces have only recently become the subject of study and they presently occupy a peripheral place in the total research effort. Research in this area seems to be hampered by the proximity of the subject to the core values of the society and culture that contains these values (Rogoff and Morelli, 1989; Smelser, 1988). This avoidance of the consideration of the influence of social and cultural values (and their representative institutions) upon human behavior may be a fact that is putting children at risk for being psychologically and emotionally undernourished (Keniston, 1977). Our culture or society may be being guided by values that are, in some ways, incompatible with healthy child development (Gronseth, 1972; Jourard, 1969; Zigler and Heller, 1984).

The failure to Identify the influence of society's values, institutions, and structures upon human behavior is itself an example of how a culture's guiding values shape its views, even to the point of shaping the questions posed by the social scientists within it. Fischer (1982) has found that the behavioral options available to individuals are greatly influenced by the sociocultural circumstances in which they live. Leaving these circumstances or conditions unexamined blunts attempts to deal adequately with the question of low father involvement in the cultivation of the psychosocial potentials of their children. Without considering the affect of sociocultural influences, investigators are left seeking explanations that are deterministic or that lack contextual richness and validity.

## Nurturance and Human Growth and Development

It is becoming increasingly clear that optimal human growth and development occur in the context of environments that actively promote such growth and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These environments may be defined as physical, psychological, sociocultural, and spiritual. The admission that environments affect the developing human gives implicit sanction to the idea that there is a human nature, or inherent potential that are cultivated by interaction with the environment. The avoidance of this viewpoint has led to much decontextualized, irrelevant, and misguided research in the area of child development (Jaeger & Rosnow, 1988). Giving preeminence to the environment has precluded the consideration of internal, species specific, cognitive, and structural considerations in human growth and development. This same perspective may also be perpetuated by the tendency to view child development from a pathological perspective (Mace, 1974). These views may have greatly slowed down the process of gaining a greater developmental understanding of human beings and of conditions that promote optimal development.

Approaching the question of child development from the above perspectives also makes consideration of the idea of nurturance much more difficult to accept. If there are no inherent potentials, then there is nothing to cultivate or nurture into fruition. Also, a traditional focus on pathology allows a perspective that downplays the responsibility of the social environment, placing it upon the individual and allowing the influence of environment to be left unexplored. Pathology can then be regarded as a sign of individual weakness, not as a result of counter-developmental sociocultural forces (Hsu, 1983). The pursuit of objectivity and the use of the experimental method for the study of human beings may also be thwarting attempts to understand important aspects of human growth and development, aspects that go beyond the well-established observation that human beings respond reflexively and behaviorally to their environments (Lamb et al. 1987). One result of these approaches may be that the social environments and the forces that perpetuate and support them have remained unexamined and persist in adversely affecting those living within them (Cohen, 1987; Rogoff & Morelli, 1989).

## Summary

The investigation into factors affecting child nurturance has only recently included fathers as legitimate subjects of study. This neglect seems to be the result of regarding fathers as developmental nonentities, as having, at best, a supportive, peripheral affect upon the cultivation of their children. Traditional research approaches to the study of child nurturance have been limited by a lack of consideration for the influence of sociocultural factors. However, a noncausal interpretation of the findings of father absence research reveals that the sociocultural system surrounding the child can be disrupted when fathers are removed from a child's life.

Recent information coming from research in the area of infant development has indicated that infants are prepared with a high degree of sophistication to engage their immediate social environments. Included in this sophistication is the ability to attach to figures other than their mothers. Fathers have also been shown to be able to attach to their infants. This new information about the capacities of fathers and infants has coincided with the recent social demand that fathers become more involved in the direct, nurturant care of their children. This demand for increased father involvement in the rearing of children is a reflection of social changes that both offer the chance for and require changes in the father's role.

The cultivation of the developmental potentials of children is an achievement that seems to be highly dependent upon the qualities of the child's immediate social environment. A component of this environment for most children is their father. However, the physical and psychological availability of fathers to their children is, in our sociocultural milieu, limited by social perceptions of the father's role and by role prescriptions that relegate fathers to the periphery of opportunities to nurture their children.

At present there exists a mismatch caused by a lack of father preparation and a concurrent demand for greater father involvement in child-care activities. This opportunity for fathers to become more involved with their children comes at a time when children in our society face an ever diminishing number of nurturance sources. This admixture of features (child need, father unpreparedness, and increasing opportunity and expectation for father involvement) has created conditions that require the support of father efforts to become more widely and effectively involved in nurturant child-care activities. Therefore, an investigation into the influences that impede the emergence of increased nurturant child-care behaviors and oportunities for fathers is a worthy pursuit.

## Statement of Problem

It seems clear that societal values, structures, and role expectations influence human behavior. Fathers as a group are being called upon, in the face of social change, to become more nurturantly involved in child-care. Concurrently, fathers are not generally being prepared by their enculturation or supported by their sociocultural surroundings to directly nurture their children. This study proposes to identify the societal expectations, structures, and practices that impede the development of nurturant fathering and that serve to deprive children of opportunities for nurturance.

## Importance of the Problem

The findings of this study have direct implications and value for those interested in the nurturance of children. Identification and examination of the sociocultural elements that that are counter-developmental are of use to those interested in securing greater opportunities for children to realize their developmental potentials.

The following chapters will examine the importance of nurturance to the development of the psychosocial potentials of children; review the literature relevant to father nurturance; explore the roots of contemporary North American fatherhood; and examine the social and cultural forces influencing nurturant fathering. Finally, a summary of results and conclusions will be drawn.

# CHAPTER 2

## Nurturance and Child Development

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the importance of a responsive social environment to the development of the potentials of children. In particular, the role of the father in the child's immediate social environment will be considered in terms of its nurturance potential. The factors that influence the cultivation of child potentials will be hereafter called "nurturance." Nurturance will be defined and discussed in terms of its contribution to the cultivation of child potentials.

### Importance of a Responsive Social Environment

An increasing volume of evidence attests to the importance of a bi-directional relationship between the child and their environments for the healthy development of the child (Ainsworth, 1978; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Greenspan, 1989; Tronick, 1982). The child's dependence upon the responsiveness of their immediate social environment is perhaps most graphically demonstrated by observing the consequences that occur to children in deprived social environments (Bakwin, 1942; Chapin, 1915; Emde, 1981; Spitz, 1946; Tronick, 1982). These consequences range from mild to severe, evidencing themselves in minor deregulations of emotions or bodily control (Tronick, 1982) to anaclitic depression and death (Emde, 1981; Spitz, 1946).

Healthy infants come into the world equipped with a variety of sensory and reflex capacities that provide the basis for attachment to their immediate caregiver(s) (Ainsworth, 1978; Greenspan, 1989; Tronick, 1982). Perhaps the most graphic proof of the child's contribution to this bi-directional, synchronous "dance" (Tronick, 1982) is revealed by the study of children disabled in one or more of the attachment modalities (Foley, 1986). Children with sensorimotor impairments often demonstrate poor communicative relationships with their parents that stem from "interactional disparity or dyssynchrony" (Foley, 1986, p. 61). Thus it seems a strong argument that children are born with the requirement of a responsive immediate social environment and that their own ability to respond is a crucial variable in the quality of their experience. When a supportive environment is not available for the child to engage, or if it has deficiencies, there seem to be inevitable consequences to the child (Emde, 1981; Tronick, 1982). Similarly, when children are impaired in their capacity to engage their environment, they are likely to have a compromised experience with it (Foley, 1986). The training and support of parents toward becoming sensitive to the altered social expressions (cues) of their disabled children can do much to normalize the influence of disability on the parent-child relationship.

## Nurturance Defined

For the purposes of this study nurturance is defined as those behaviors or conditions that promote the development or cultivation of children's potentials. In particular, father nurturance will be defined in terms of indirect or direct nurturance. Indirect father nurturance is father behavior that enables the cultivation of child abilities. Direct father nurturance is father behavior that occurs within the father-infant dyad that cultivates a child's potentials. The social and cultural milieu that surrounds children may also be evaluated in terms of the influence that it has upon the developmental potentials of children. The nurturant qualities of a society are revealed in the opportunities, environments, institutions, values, resources, and policies that it offers the children growing up within it.

## Nurturance and the Cultivation of Human Potential

As mentioned above, the emerging developmental literature supports the observations of earlier observers that children require a supportive environment in order to grow and develop to their potentials (Emde, 1989; Greenspan, 1989; Tronick, 1982). Perhaps the most telling evidence for these capacities comes from the study of infants reared in severely deprived or institutional environments (Bakwin, 1942; Chapin, 1915; Emde, 1981; Spitz, 1946; Tronick, 1982). If there were no inner, organismic requirement for nurturance then it would be difficult to imagine why children exposed to these conditions would respond so adversely to them.

Human Development and Nurturance. An understanding of human nurturance greatly facilitates the understanding of human development. If human qualities are to be optimally developed, nurturers must know what it is that they are wanting to bring forth and must know when to expect the emergence of the qualities sought.

Several principles of human development are important to note when considering human nurturance. First, human development is continuous. There is a continuity between the stages and spheres of life. Second, the healthy family is the most likely setting for optimal human development to occur (Ainsworth, 1978). Third, human children are heterogeneous and therefore vary on almost every measurable characteristic. Fourth, human development involves more than the formal cognitive system or intellect. The "whole child" is multifaceted and nurturant endeavors should foster physical and mental health, cognitive development, and optimal emotional and motivational development. Fifth, human development is bi-directional, not uni-directional (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This principle of bi-directionality implies that intervention or nurturance is best achieved when both child and environmental aspects are maximized. Finally, a child's development is affected by many aspects of the social milieu (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Zigler and Heller, 1984). All of these principles of development are affected by policy decisions made at local, provincial, and national levels. A lack of awareness of these principles by policy makers can serve to generate policies that adversly affect the nurturance of children.

Inherent Capacities. To gain a deeper understanding of the "organismic requirements " of the human infant, it is necessary to understand the biological substrates of the needs. The discipline of developmental biology has been attempting to isolate these substrates and has generated some interesting findings. This field of study maintains that all behavioral characteristics have evolved as a result of natural selection and are functional in that they "extract or provoke inputs required for further growth" (Harper, 1989, p. 15). In other words, there is a transactional relationship between infants and their surroundings that can be viewed as adaptive and appropriate to the environments with which the child is involved. The environment is seen as providing conditions that activate genetic potentials within the child. "Sign stimuli" are seen as being the critical environmental inputs for the expression of fundamental, human behavioral characteristics. These are the effective environmental conditions that foster the development of species attributes that promote individual fitness. To illustrate, Harper (1989) states that:

> If mothering is the primary source of stimuli constituting the environment to which human infants

> are adapted, it would follow that infants are not only dependent upon a certain modicum of mothering-like stimuli for growth and development, but they should also be capable of provoking needed stimulation. (p. 95)

Species specific and typical development depends, according to this point of view, upon a specific set of external conditions. When these conditions are absent or deficient it is reasonable to assume that the child, whose optimum development is dependent upon these conditions, will react adversely. This assumption seems adequate to explain the observations of those who have noted the responses of infants to sterile or severely abusive social environments (Bakwin, 1942; Chapin, 1915; Emde, 1981; Spitz, 1946; Tronick, 1982).

There is some evidence that from birth the infant is in an active search for conditions in the immediate social environment that will allow for engagement and development in a dynamic, bi-directional social relationship. The healthy growth and development of the infant is highly dependent upon the achievement of this bi-directional, social relationship. If thwarted, the child will be unable to negotiate successfully the higher order tasks required for subsequent functioning (Greenspan, 1989). It seems that the inability to engage the primary social environment causes an organismic response in the infant which is demonstrated by physical and psychological deregulation (Tronick, 1982). This deregulation, and its more extreme manifestations of anaclitic depression or death (Spitz, 1946), could not be posited to exist if there were not a biological substrate or organismic requirement for the type of validation by the social environment that is mentioned above.

Evidence of Inherent Capacities. The nurturance of children involves the cultivation of capacities that are inherent to the human species. Without the acknowledgement that these capacities exist and that they require cultivation by the environment, it is possible to ignore them and to give other interpretations to the consequences observed. A classic example of this alternate interpretation is found in the literature of the first half of the twentieth century dealing with the observation that infants fared poorly in institutions. Typically these infants would succumb to disease and many of them would die (Bakwin, 1942; Chapin, 1915; Spitz, 1946). Many explanations of this phenomenon were sought ranging from malnutrition to cross infection. Malnutrition occured in these infants despite caloric intake being more than adequate to maintain normal growth in non-institutionalized children (Bakwin, 1942). Cross, or nosocomial infections occur when hospitalized children become infected by microflora other than the one for which they were initially hospitalized. The mortality rates attributable to cross infections were particularly high prior to the introduction of antibiotics and before changes in the treatment of hospitalized infants were recommended by the American Medical Association (1977). The cross infection theory initially resulted in changes in hospital procedure that served to further isolate infants from human contact. Bakwin (1942) reported the following picture of the attempt to protect children from the danger of cross infection:

> The large open ward of the past has been replaced by small, cubicled rooms in which masked, hooded, and scrubbed nurses and physicians move about cautiously so as to not stir up bacteria. Visiting parents are strictly excluded, and the infants receive a minimum of handling by the staff. (p. 31)

This concentration upon symptoms in the treatment of infant problems led to an approach that exacerbated the initial symptoms (failure to gain weight, disrupted sleep patterns, delayed speech development, listlessness, apathy, and proneness to infection of the respiratory tract (Bakwin, 1942). A misunderstanding of the child's organismic requirements for a responsive immediate social environment, crowned by the absence of an attachment figure(s), led to techniques that were incompatible with the healthy functioning of children.

The failure of researchers and theorists to acknowledge the inherent capacities or organismic requirements of infants served to inhibit the development of an accurate understanding of the importance to infants of a developmentally supportive social environment. This same, limited approach to investigation was also evident in initial attempts to understand more about the father's role in child cultivation. For example, although it did enable the father role to gain status in terms of its developmental salience to children, father absence research failed to demonstrate that fathers were operating in a sociocultural ecology. Consequently, the view of fathers held by theorists and practitioners remained unidimensional. Concentration upon the father-child dyad re-committed the sin of isolating one of many salient and interrelated variables and thereby led to some major misunderstandings about the nurturance of children (Pedersen, 1976; Lamb et al. 1987). A limited view of children and fathers combined to guarantee a limited understanding of the father's potential and actual influence upon the cultivation of child potentials.

## Nurturance and the Attachment Relationship

There is a strong suggestion that the successful achievement of a healthy attachment relationship is the foundation for much subsequent growth and development (Ainsworth, 1978; Bowlby, 1958; Sroufe, 1983; Tronick, 1982). A faulty attachment relationship would likely compromise the child's ability to secure nurturance. This being the case, an understanding of the attachment phenomenon should enhance our understanding of child nurturance.

The establishment of an attachment relationship is a primary goal of infancy. The healthy human infant comes into the world equipped with a variety of reflexive and sensory capacities that enable it to engage its primary caregivers in a bi-directional "dance" (Tronick, 1982). This dance serves as an important foundation for subsequent social development and is instrumental in securing for the infant the proximity of its parents and the meeting of immediate, physical and social needs (Ainsworth, 1969). The works of observers and clinicians cited above (Bakwin, 1942; Chapin, 1915; Emde, 1989; Greenspan, 1990; Spitz, 1946) all converge upon the observation that infants require more than custodial attention to their needs for nutrition and physical comfort. Failure to secure an attachment relationship puts an infant in a compromised position with regards to receiving psychosocial nurturance. It seems plain that infants are in need of, and actively search for, psychosocial nurturance (Greenspan, 1990; Tronick, 1982). The outcome of this search has direct developmental implications for the child. A healthy attachment relationship, then, provides the foundation for future psychosocial achievements.

The achievement of a healthy attachment relationship is dependent upon the health of the infant's sensory and behavioral modalities of attachment. However, the success of each child's overtures to attach is dependent upon the responsiveness of their immediate social environment, that is to say, of their parents or primary caregivers. In particular, the qualities of the primary attachment figure are of importance. Harper (1989) has identified three important qualities of an attachment figure. They must be someone who is familiar to the child, is responsive to their signals, and is a salient figure in the child's life. The role of the adult in the attachment process, then, seems to be one of support in that their availability, responsivity, and salience to the child influence the success of the child's attachment efforts. Harper (1989) notes that: "adult influences are better conceived as supportive in that they provide the context for the expression of certain facets of the child's range of potentials" (p. 208). Children, then, have potentials that, for their cultivation, are highly dependent upon the support of qualities that exist in their immediate social environments. The quality of attachment relationship secured by the child is influential in that it provides the degree of "secure base" from which the child explores their social, physical, and emotional worlds (Ainsworth, Bell, & Stayton, 1971; Bowlby, 1958). Children who are securely attached are in a much more favorable position in terms of their availability to receive nurturing from both their attachment figures and their wider social environments.

The Consequences of Non-nurturance. As noted above, there are consequences that result from a child's being under-nourished by an unresponsive environment. A general consequence is that child developmental capacities are not cultivated. These capacities exist in the cognitive, social, psychosexual, and physical domains. Rene Spitz (1945, 1946), when describing the effects of attempting to engage a socially sterile environment, noted that infants became unresponsive to their social and physical environments. He also noted that these children became listless, failed to gain weight, and that they had a radically lowered resistance to disease, which often led to their premature deaths. Without the support of a responsive primary social environment these children became what Spitz (1946) termed anaclitically depressed and were unable to move on to higher developmental tasks such as play or the give and take of bi-directional social intercourse. Deprived of this primary nurturing, these anaclitically depressed children were not able to either give or receive nurturance.

Ainsworth (1969) noted that the quality of attachment relationship varies from child to child and that three distinct patterns typify the child's reactions to separation from their mother. These styles were: securely attached, insecurely attached, and anxiously attached (Ainsworth, 1969). Added support for the bi-directional influence noted above was gained by Ainsworth's extended observation that the attachment style of individual children was correlated to the parenting styles of their mothers. For example, the mothers of securely attached infants were found to be more positively responsive to the signals, cues, and smiles of their infants than were the mothers of insecurely attached or anxiously attached infants (Ainsworth, 1969). This finding denotes the importance, influence, and primacy of the attachment relationship in the life of the infant. It also concurs with the observation of Harper (1989) that adults provide support for the expression of "certain facets of the child's range of potentials" (p. 208). The quality of this adult support is highly influential in that it directly affects the development of the child's psychosocial potentials.

It is an increasingly accepted hypothesis that the healthy human infant is born equipped to scan and engage its immediate social environment in order to secure for itself the nurturance that it requires to develop its potentials. If this environment is negligent, then the organismic requirements of the infant will likely be compromised, increasing the probability that their potentials will be less actualized. Given the child's need for a responsive immediate social environment a question arises about the capability of the stressed modern family to provide this responsiveness (Keniston, 1977; Zigler & Heller, 1984). A wider question is that of society's ability or willingness to support families in this task (Keniston, 1977; Mitchell, 1987; Zigler & Heller, 1984).

## Current Social Trends

The ecological view maintains that all human behavior takes place within a social contexts and is sensitive to these contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lamb et al., 1987). There are at present two major trends operating in North American society that affect the nurturant opportunities available to its children. Specifically: (a) the changing role of women, and (b) increasing cutbacks in spending by governments in the areas of child and family nurturance.

The Changing Role of Women. The increased number of mothers involved in the work force has meant a definite change in the functioning and structure of families. The typical two-parent, one bread-winner family of a generation ago is now the exception, not the rule (Mitchell, 1987; Zigler and Heller, 1984). Mitchell (1987) noted that for 62% of the families in which mothers work fulltime, their income contributions were required to keep their families above the poverty line. It seems evident that socioeconomic factors can affect families by compromising the integrity of the nurturant environment available to children.

Mother involvement in paid work alters the traditional nurturance base available to children. From an ecological point of view, to maintain this base, the sociocultural environment must compensate children by offering them alternate sources of nurturance. One example of an alternate source of nurturance might be the availability of quality daycare facilities. Mitchell (1987) notes, however, that there seems to be little political support for the development and maintenance of such facilities. Increased father involvement is another possible source of such compensation. However, given the father's traditional, low level of involvement in the direct nurturance of children, this change would likely require a great deal of social support.

Lack of Political Support. The low priority of children evident in government spending and policy initiatives serves as a graphic illustration of the decline of nurturant sources to children. In part, this decline reflects the economic realities of our times. High unemployment and inflation serve to eat into the resources that are available to provide such services to children. What becomes more evident, however, is that children and families occupy a low social policy priority. This is indicated by the fact that supportive programs to these groups are amoung the first to be cut when times are hard (Keniston, 1977; Mitchell, 1987; Zigler and Heller, 1984). This low social priority of children makes no sense from an economic or a developmental perspective, especially when considering the long term implications of such neglect.

Another issue of concern is that the policies of many agencies that ostensibly are in existence to support children and families reveal an anti-family bias when their policies are examined (Baker, 1990; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Zigler & Heller, 1984). When this occurs, the integrity of families is threatened and children may be removed from their families when there is no risk to them other than that generated by the unavailability of supportive resources or the rigid interpretation of policies (Zigler & Heller, 1984).

The Clash of Research and Policy. A related element that bears upon the availability of nurturant resources to children is that of the existence of a gap between present research knowledge in the area of child development and the process of policy formation. Keniston (1977) posits that this gap or lag exists because policy makers have value laden biases which, in our culture, express themselves as a tendency to place responsibility upon the individual and not consider how the wider socio-political milieu affects people. Essentially, policy makers do not contextualize the problems faced by the people for whom they are ostensibly designing policies. Indeed, the role of policy makers is to generate policies that, in the main, reflect the values and priorities of the society that they operate within. If this is the case, we might assume that policy makers would select and interpret social science data in a manner that reflects the guiding values of their society. As the final word on policy is most always a political one, it is not surprising that policies would tend to reflect core political values and the vested interests that accompany them.

Basically, there is a dichotomy in how families and children are viewed by society. These views distill into two camps: (a) the intrapsychic view, and (b) the extrapsychic view (Caplan and Nelson, 1973). The intrapsychic view attributes maladjustment to faults within the individuals and families, while the extrapsychic view attributes maladjustment to external conditions. Policy makers in our society tend to view individual or family difficulties as having intrapsychic origins. This attribution of difficulties to intrapsychic causes explains why the focus of policies and intervention efforts has been upon changing the child or changing family dynamics rather than changing aspects of the sociocultural milieu that may be contributing to child or familial dysfunction (Fogel & Melson, 1986; Keniston, 1977). This incompatability between social sciences research and the policy making process stems from the lack of common ground between them. This means that the formulation of mutually important questions is difficult and that existing policies remain resistant to change (Fogel & Melson, 1986).

The implications of this situation are quite enormous for society, its families, and its children. If policy making is hinged to the guiding principles of society and if these are found to be counter-developmental, a serious problem exists. Developmentally insensitive policies have definite consequences for the children and families affected by them. They are an integral part of the sociocultural milieu surrounding the child and, by definition, will act to interfere with efforts to nurture the child. What is required are policies that are sensitive to the realities of human development and the needs of families (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Decline of Nurturant Sources to Children. There is strong indication that the number and quality of nurturant sources to children in our society are declining (Zigler & Heller, 1984; Fogel, Melson, & Mistry, 1986; Keniston, 1977; Lamb, 1986). This conclusion was derived from a variety of demographic indicators such as health, poverty, economic, and policy evaluations. According to these authors, for many children the actual opportunities for nurturance belie the pro-child rhetoric that is often espoused by policy makers. This rhetoric serves, according to these authors, to mask evidence that certain groups of children are being systematically denied opportunities for nurturance. The general consensus with regard to nurturance is that the condition of children in Canadian society (Mitchell, 1987) and the United States (Boger et al., 1984; Keniston, 1977) is worsening. This is said to be the case because of a lack of social support during a time of major change in the structure of families and to the low priority given to children by policy makers. According to Zigler and Heller (1984) there is a systematic reduction of supopport for children that is indicated by a variety of social indexes (infant mortality rates, general health statistics, and the number, kind and quality of child oriented resources available). The Advisory Committee on Child Development (1976) noted that despite the ranking of the United States as the world's most technologically advanced nation, it ranked sixteenth amoung 30 industrialized nations in terms of its infant mortality rate. This was postulated to be the case because of the structure of the health care system, which precludes equal access to medical services.

According to Keniston (1977) only 6% of U.S. federal health care dollars are spent for child health. The Advisory Committee on Child Development (1976) found that fully one third of children in the United States did not receive adequate health care. These authors also expressed concern that social policies were not keeping pace with current social trends such as the increased involvement of mothers in the paid workforce and the economic realities presented by an economy in recession (Zigler & Heller, 1984; Keniston, 1977). Mitchell (1987) noted that adequate daycare arrangements are still largely absent for many Canadian families in spite of the obvious need for such services created by shifting family patterns and a changing economy. In the United States, a recessionary economy has resulted in a reduction of funding by state and federal governments to many existing programs. Zigler and Heller (1984) feel that this trend bodes ill for the development of new programs designed to meet the needs of families dealing with the challenge of raising children in the present sociocultural environment.

The general problem in the area of services to children stems from not acknowledging, in a practical way, those forces operating in the wider sociocultural environment which affect families. Keniston (1977) addresses this issue when he states:

> We see the characteristics and problems of individual children with enormous perceptiveness but too often overlook the social and economic influences that define and limit the range of choices parents of every social level can make for their offspring. (p. xiii)

In fact, there seems to be a tendency to simultaneously regard families as autonomous, primary sources of nurturance for the child and to not support their integrity, to leave them adrift to face a variety of social forces that mitigate against the maintenance of a nurturant environment for children. Again Keniston (1977) notes the importance of the family to children when he states: "To support children almost always requires supporting their families; to understand the development of children, the lives of their parents must be understood" (p.xiv). Keniston (1977) and Fischer (1982) note that children are highly influenced by the organization and structure of the economic, social, and technological settings in which they grow. Policies and practices are often developed without consideration of their effects upon children. This practice, says Keniston, must change.

### Current State of the Family

The North American family is currently in a state of transition (Baker, 1990; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Keniston, 1977). The family has been affected in the following ways during this transition: First, there are more mothers working out of the home since the end of World War Two and this trend is continuing (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Mitchell, 1987). Second, family size (number of siblings) has steadily declined, the average Canadian family having 1.3 children (Baker, 1990). Third, families are geographically remote from extended family members (Mitchell, 1987). Fourth, families are less attached to their communities and are more isolated and dependent upon themselves (Lamb, 1986;

Lynn, 1974). Each of these has implications for the nurturance of the children growing up within families. For example, an increase in time spent in non-parental care means that children are less available to receive parental nurturance and more subject to or dependent upon surrogates for nurturing (Clarke-Stewart, 1982). A reduced number of siblings means a reduced opportunity to be nurtured by older siblings (Fogel, Melson, & Mistry 1986). Geographic remoteness from extended family members removes both parents and children from nurturance by grandparents and other family members (Lamb, 1986). The isolation of the family unit, which stems largely from social changes and the expectation that families should be and self-sufficient, removes both parents and children from potential sources of nurturance and security (Keniston, 1977).

Implications for Children. Given the importance of nurturance to the development of children, an awareness of how sources of nurturance can be compromised is important. If society is systematically undermining these sources via policy inadequacies, incompatible priorities, and faulty role expectations, then it is important to understand why this might be so. Nurturance, whether societal, familial, or paternal is important in the process of cultivating child capacities. Threats to any of these sources of nurturance have developmental implications for children. For example, the above mentioned lack of support to families may threaten the nurturance available to children by stressing parents or by dictating their absence from the home.

On a societal level, a disruption of nurturant opportunities can be gauged by looking at demographic data. In the United States, for example, 500,000 to 750,000 children are growing up outside their own homes each year in foster or institutional care. It is estimated that there are one million child abuse victims annually in the United States. Also, in the United States, roughly one million children run away from their homes each year (Children's Defence Fund, 1976). These figures indicate that something is amiss in the sociocultural environment within which these children are raised.

Implications for society. The social costs of not looking after children, of not nurturing them developmentally, emotionally, and educationally are difficult to calculate. They can be estimated in monetary terms but there is also a cost in terms of the human potential that is squandered by such neglect. Wallerstein (1989), when speaking of one aspect of the threat to nurturant sources for children (divorce), comments that our "divorce-prone society is producing its first generation of young adults, men and women so anxious about attachment and love that their ability to create enduring families is imperiled" (p. 119). There are, it seems, developmental consequences that stem from societal trends. Not examining the social forces behind social phenomenon can have grave implications for children growing up at the mercy of those forces. Human nurturance occurs within a sociocultural context. The health of a society will be compromised if it systematically neglects the cultivation of the psychosocial potentials of its children by ignoring the health of its sociocultural environment.

## The Nurturant Father

As mentioned above, father nurturance is defined as those fathering behaviors that either directly or indirectly cultivate the developmental capacities of children. A main premise of this study is that fathers in North American society have traditionally been confined to nurturing their children via peripheral, indirect activities such as breadwinning and working to stabilize their families materially (Cohen, 1987; Lamb, 1986; Lamb et al., 1987; Lynn, 1974; Pleck, 1987). This traditional fatherhood role has served to cause emotional suffering in families, children, and fathers themselves because it removed them all from the possibility of being more completely nurtured (Franklin, 1988; Hsu, 1983; Jourard, 1969; Lynn, 1974). In order to fully understand the challenges presented to the development of a more pervasive father nurturance in our society, it is important to understand the roots and behaviors of traditional fatherhood.

It has only been within recent human history that Western society has developed social conditions that have allowed the family to consider departing from this traditional pattern and to examine alternatives on a large scale. This examination has called into question the premises of our families and the roles that have been traditionally played by both men and women. This re-examination has allowed us to take a critical look at the roles of men and women and to ask questions such as the one posed by this thesis: Are the cultivation and demonstration of direct, nurturant fathering behaviors in North America being adversely influenced by sociocultural factors?

The changing roles of men and women may have created a vacuum that leaves them confused and at odds regarding their roles in the nurturance of their children (Parke & Tinsley, 1984). This confusion may be especially true for men because of a historical and sociocultural legacy that has not prepared them for a direct role in child nurturance.

### Summary

Upon reviewing a sample of the body of knowledge dealing with the developmental requirements of human infants, it is clear that they require psychosocial nurturance. The primary source of this nurturance comes from the infants' immediate social environment-most often from their parents. The importance of the responsiveness of this environment to the inherent capacities of infants was emphasized as was the infant's "organismic" requirement for such responsiveness. A more in-depth understanding of the father's potential role in child development has been delayed by methodological limitations. Also, a limited view of infant and father potentials, combined with the lack of a contextual approach to the study of this question, has served to blunt this investigation.

The foundation of direct child nurturance seems to be the attachment relationship. The father's traditional role does not place him in the position of being available or equipped to attach to his children. This physical and emotional unavailability is, it seems, largely a sociocultural by-product. Research also strongly that fathers are capable of attaching to their infants. These two conclusions would suggest that a lack of father involvement in the direct nurturance of children has a strong sociocultural basis.

That many children in our present sociocultural milieu are at risk for under-nurturance of their psychosocial potentials is suggested by demographic statistics that reveal that children, as a group, are under-valued by our society. One result of this under-valuation is that children in our culture are facing a declining number of opportunities to receive nurturance. The development and demonstration of nurturant fathering behaviors are not encouraged in North American society. In fact, the manifestion of nurturing behaviors in males may be actively and systematically discouraged by existing social values, practices, and structures. If fathers are being systematically unprepared for the task of child nurturance, the present social expectations for them are that they become more actively involved in direct child-care and nurturance. This predicament could be postulated to be generating much stress within men and within their relationships. The following chapter will review the literature pertaining to the contribution of fathers to the cultivation of the psychosocial potentials of their children.

# CHAPTER 3

## Father Nurturance: A Review of the Literature

### The Exclusion of Fathers

The investigation into the developmental influence of fathers upon their children is a relatively recent undertaking. Historically, fathers have been absent from the realm of serious study in this area for several reasons. Primary amoung these is that mothers have dominated the views of those interested in the effects of parent behavior upon children (Lamb, 1986; Lamb and Lamb, 1976; Lynn, 1974; Nash, 1965). This focus was due to the traditional home centeredness, availability, and responsibility of mothers for their children (Cohen, 1987; Josselyn, 1956). Tradition also decreed that fathers were not directly involved in child-rearing and that their contributions were peripheral and designed to enable the physical, material integrity of the family unit. This traditional arrangement not only established definite role expectations but also served to influence how the father was perceived and, hence, studied in his host culture.

One outcome of this neglect was that fathers came to be regarded as developmental nonentities (Bowlby, 1958; Mead, 1953; Muir, 1989). Another outcome was that fathers themselves were deprived of the opportunity to be emotionally available to, and nurtured by, their children (Biller & Meredith, 1974; Franklin, 1988; Jourard, 1969). This traditional exclusion of the father has also served to render the study of aspects of child development simplistic, unidimensional, and devoid of the contextual information that offers a richer picture of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Gurwitt, 1989; Lamb & Lamb, 1976; Pedersen, 1976).

## The inclusion of Fathers

The traditional exclusion of fathers as legitimate subjects of study has more recently been addressed in the literature of child development (Cath, Gurwitt, & Gunsberg, 1989; Cohen, 1987; Cotterell, 1986; Lamb, 1981, 1986; Lynn, 1974; Nash, 1965). What is being systematically revealed is that fathers can potentially play an important and influential role in the cultivation of the psychosocial potentials of their children (Biller, 1982; Cath et al., 1989; Lamb, 1986; Lamb, Pleck, & Levine, 1985; Lynn, 1974; Russell, 1983). Lamb and Lamb (1976) state that: "Far from being irrelevant or insignificant, fathers are salient figures in the lives of their infants from early in life" (p. 383). Also, the acknowledgement that father contributions to the development of their children occur in a wider, sociocultural context has enabled researchers to increase their understanding of the father's role in child development (Tomlinson, 1987; Yogman, 1983; Zimmer & Witnov, 1990). These are exciting findings with enormous implications for men, marriages, parents, children, and the society that contains them all. Many questions exist regarding the developmental implications for children of increased father involvement. Researchers are continuing to identify the contributions made by fathers to the development of their children. The following material will review the extant literature in these areas.

## Fathers and the Attachment Relationship

Attachment can be defined as the affective and emotional bond that develops between an infant and its principal caregiver(s) (Sroufe & Waters, 1977). The development of this attachment bond is dependent upon the close proximity and responsiveness of both infant and caregiver, which are maintained by attachment behaviors (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969; Sutherland, 1980). Sroufe (1983) maintains that the quality of this early attachment relationship is crucial for the child's subsequent psychosocial development. As such, the attachment relationship may be regarded as the foundation of direct child nurturance.

*Father Salience*. Infants are capable of forming strong attachment relationships with their fathers within the first seven months of their lives (Cohen & Campos, 1974; Cronenwett & Kunst-Wilson, 1981; Fein, 1976; Greenberg and Morris, 1974; Parke, 1981). The quality of this infant-father attachment relationship has been shown to be qualitatively different from the infant-mother relationship and to reflect the generally more robust and playful handling of fathers. The formation and quality of an attachment relationship is dependent upon the attached-to adult being available and able to initiate and respond to the attachment behaviors of the child (Ainsworth, Bell, & Strayton, 1974; Jones, 1981; Isabella & Belsky, 1991). These attachment figure requirements do not, it seems, coincide with common outcomes of male enculturation in our society. It becomes evident that the early observation that children were not generally attached to their fathers was not due to the inability of fathers to attach to their children. A more plausible explanation is that fathers were unavailable to become attachment objects (Parke & O'leary, 1976; Parke & Sawin, 1976; Pedersen, 1980). This unavailability of fathers seems to be highly influenced by societal and cultural expectations of fathers and the degree to which individual fathers subscribe to those expectations ( McBride, 1989; Novak, 1990; Palkovitz, 1984; Parke & Tinsley, 1981; Tomlinson, 1987; Yogman, 1983).

Many infants demonstrate a discriminating responsiveness when relating to their mothers or fathers (Yogman, 1982). Mothers are sought mostly for comfort in the forms of solace, feeding, and cuddling while fathers are sought primarily for vigorous play and social interaction (Lamb, 1976; Pedersen, 1980; Yogman, 1982). These discriminating attachment behaviors may well be reflections of the enculturation of parents which has prepared them to respond in different, gender-based ways to their infants. In this manner, the complimentary, gender-based behavior of both parents may provide infants with a well-rounded social experience and definite messages about gender expectations. These messages influence the development of the child's gender role identity. Opportunities for early, nurturant father involvement (in the context of an attachment relationship) would, therefore, make good sense from a developmental standpoint (Lamb, 1975, 1976d; Sroufe, 1983; Tronick, 1982).

Characterstics of Attachment Figures. In order to nurture, a father must be in relationship, not just in proximity to his child. The attachment relationship provides an excellent forum in which to nurture or cultivate child potentials. In order to attach to their infants, father's must be available physically and emotionally to them and must demonstrate behaviors that enable attachment to occur. Both availability and competence level are, it seems, highly influenced by sociocultural factors (Cohen, 1987; Radin & Harold-Goldsmith, 1989). These parental attachment behaviors are: sensitivity to the child's cues; responsiveness; touching; playfulness; and proximity (Ainsworth, 1978; Tronick, 1982). It is of interest that these attachment behaviors are incompatible with father behaviors characteristic of traditional fatherhood (Day & Mackey, 1986; Josselyn, 1956). Father availability runs counter to both the traditional role expectations of fathers and (logically) to training in child-care skills (Lamb, 1986; Pleck, 1987). In short, although fathers have the potential to nurture their children, as a group men in North American culture are not being prepared to do so. This lack of preparation manifests itself in a lack of child-rearing skills and role conflict issues (Boudreau, 1986; Lamb, 1986).

Benefits to Children. Fathers can provide infants with an attachment figure outside of the mother-infant dyad. This addition of the father as an attachment figure has been found to be related to the child's degree of social comfort and confidence (Lamb, 1975; Muir, 1989). Attachment to fathers also provides children with the opportunity to engage fathers in a variety of activities that are unique and that match or supplement maternal attachment contributions (Lamb & Lamb, 1976; Power & Parke, 1982). In keeping with the principle of bi-directionality, it is important to note that fathers also derive developmental benefits from being in relationship with their infants. Fathers who have children and who attach to them benefit by becoming psychologically mature in ways that are unavailable to non-fathers (Biller & Meredith, 1974; Heath, 1978; Lamb, 1986;Tomlinson, 1987). These benefits involve feelings of fulfillment, satisfaction, and a more positive outlook.

## The Effects of Father Absence

Much information regarding the father's contribution to the development of his children has been derived from studies of children who have been father-deprived. The limitations of this research strategy have been cited by Pedersen (1976), who pointed out that only some of the differences noted between father-present and father absent children were due exclusively to the father-child relationship. Children growing up in father-absent families can be affected by conditions such as an altered family structure, differences in maternal role behavior, greater amount of time spent with mother, proportionally less time spent with a male adult, increased amount of time spent with surrogate caregivers, and less financial resources (Pedersen, 1976). Pedersen advocates studying father influence in the context of the nuclear family. Broadening Pedersen's approach to include the wider sociocultural environment can further contextualize the father's role.

In spite of the short-comings inherent in the methodology of father-absence studies, it is of use to mention its general findings. This is also of use because of the relative lack of current research and because of the ecological questions begged by the raw findings of this approach. In contrast to father- deprived children, father-present children have been found to be more curious and adventuresome in exploring their environments and more socially confident (Spelke, Zelazo, Kagan, & Kotelchuk, 1973). It has been observed that father-deprived infants are delayed in their motor skill development when compared to their father-present counterparts (Biller & Meredith, 1974). The active play initiated by fathers also contributes to children being more willing to extend their present limits and to tolerate discomfort to a higher degree (Biller, 1974; Biller & Meredith, 1974; Lamb, 1986). The above observed relationships may be related to another observation, that of the increased cognitive development noted in what Henry Biller calls "well-fathered" children (Biller, 1982). The child who receives encouragement to actively explore its environment, to tolerate frustration, and to stick to tasks is logically able to grow cognitively. These qualities seem to be outcomes of contact with positively involved fathers (Lamb, 1986; Spelke et al., 1973). Father-absence studies have also revealed that father deprived children show delays in their social and psychosexual development (Biller, 1982; Lamb, 1986; Roggman & Peery, 1989).

This method of research has short-comings in that it fails to be sensitive to the father's ecological niche, its interrelationship with a host of other sociocultural features. It does reveal, however, that father presence is important and that quality and type of father interaction influences developmental outcomes for children.

## The General Developmental Contributions of Fathers

Fathers can contribute to the development of their children by supporting an environment that is conducive to the cultivation of child potentials (Muir, 1989). Lamb (1986) differentiates these general and various father activities (eg. breadwinning, sex-role modeling, moral guidance, emotional support to mothers) from what he terms "active fathering." This term describes a fathering style characterized by "active, nurturant caretaking" (Lamb, 1986, p. 6). This "active nurturant caretaking" is influenced by a variety of sociocultural features that will be discussed subsequent to this section.

Breadwinning. Breadwinning is a characteristic that is highly identified with the father's traditional role (Cohen, 1987; Lamb, 1986; Pleck, 1983; Russell, 1983). Even though an increasing number of mothers are working outside of the home, fathers are still identified as (and still are) primary breadwinners (Lamb, 1986; Lynn, 1974). The economic support traditionally provided by fathers provides for the stability of the household, provides fathers with self-esteem, and contributes in an indirect and yet tangible way to the cultivation and emotional health of children. The male role of breadwinner is, upon review of anthropological evidence, one that is nearly constantly evident in human cultures (Parke, 1981). Parke (1981) also maintains that the existence of cultures in which the care of children is equally or more exclusively the responsibility of fathers is strong evidence for the argument that direct, nurturant fathering is a sociocultural achievement partially allowed by the release of fathers from the primary breadwinning role.

Emotional Support. Emotional support to others by fathers, especially to mothers, contributes to the development of children in that it enables the quality of the mother-child relationship to be enhanced (Goodyer, 1990; Muir, 1989; Parke, Power, & Gottman, 1979). This facet of indirect father support serves to facilitate the positive adjustment of children by surrounding them with a more harmonious parental relationship. If children are cared for primarily by their mothers, then the emotional health of mothers, cultivated and supported by fathers, is of primary importance to the nurturance of children. Related to this support of mothers is the contribution made by fathers when they are involved in child-related housework. This type of involvement eases the traditional workload of mothers again enabling them to interact more positively with their children (Pleck, 1984). This father support may also help to break down sex-role stereotypes and gender role norms that perpetuate the present, traditional split between men and women with regards to their involvement in the cultivation of their children. As mentioned above, father contributions can be classified as indirect nurturance when they meet the criterion of _enabling_ the nurturance of children.

_Direct Interaction_. Fathers may also influence the development of their children by interacting with them directly in activities such as care-taking, teaching, playing, and various one-to-one interactions (Lamb, 1981). These direct father influences are in essence the central subject matter of this study as the degree of direct father involvement seems to be so powerfully influenced by the historical, cultural, and societal forces that define and delimit the father's role. Also, it has become abundantly clear that fathers can contribute directly to nurturing the psychosocial capacities of their children (Biller, 1982; Lamb, 1986; Lamb & Oppenheim, 1989; Lynn, 1974; Muir, 1989; Parke, 1981; Russell, 1983).

This knowledge has emerged concurrent to two very important social trends. These trends are: (a) the request by contemporary society that men become more highly involved with their children in a direct child-care capacity, and (b) the decline in both the number and quality of nurturant opportunities available to children (Keniston, 1977; Mitchell, 1987; Zelizer, 1985; Zigler & Heller, 1984). These trends serve to offer men the opportunity to become more influential in the cultivation of their children and highlight the urgency of doing so. Also, by expecting men to become more involved in direct child-rearing, it becomes obvious that fathers, as a group, are ill-prepared to do so.

## The Specific Developmental Contributions of Fathers

That fathers can nurture the developmental potentials of their children is widely agreed upon by those interested in the development of children. Not only do fathers have the capacity to nurture their children but this nurturance can manifest itself in some unique developmental outcomes for children (Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Lamb, Pleck, & Levine, 1985; Pruett, 1983; Radin, 1982). The specific developmental contributions of fathers can be categorized into three areas. These are: sex-role orientation, cognitive functioning, and psychosocial adjustment. Each of these areas will now be systematically and individually discussed.

Sex Role Orientation. Fathers have been found to be highly influential with regards to the sex role development of their children, both in our own culture and cross-culturally (Henderson, 1980; Roggman & Peery, 1989; Thompson, 1986; Whiting, Kluckhohn, and Anthony, 1958). Roggman and Peery (1989) maintain that distinct social environments are created for both males and females in the context of early parent-infant social play. This early experience lays the foundation for future enculturation efforts. A central factor in the development of a strong and secure sex-role identity is the existence of a warm, affectionate, and attentive father-child relationship

(Biller, 1982; Lamb, 1981, 1986; Mussen and Rutherford, 1963). These nurturant father qualities have the effect of increasing the developmental salience of fathers by establishing the foundation necessary for a nurturing parent-child relationship (the attachment relationship).

The level of decision-making that a father occupies also influences the development of the sex-role orientation of his children (Biller, 1972). When both parents exhibit competent decision-making skills in a cooperative atmosphere, the sex-role orientation of children is more secure. A father's involvement in and style of discipline also has been shown to affect the sex-role orientation of his children. This may be so because children tend to model the behavior of fathers and to react to the particular disciplinary style employed (Biller, 1981). Style of discipline can send a message to children about who parents feel the child is in terms of their competence, goodness, and worth. For example, if the disciplinary style attacks the child rather than dealing with the specific incident of misbehavior, the message to the child is likely going to be negative. Discipline by fathers has been found to be most effective when administered in the context of an established, affectionate father-child relationship (Bandura & Walters, 1959; Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1973). Punitive fathers evoke frustrated responses from their children that reveal a lack of father identification by the child. This outcome would likely have a negative effect upon the father-child relationship and hinder the nurturance potential of the father.

Paternal efficacy, as revealed in the father's decision-making, is also cited in the literature as being a factor involved in determining father salience to children vis a vis sex-role orientation. If fathers are effective decision makers their children tend to adopt a stronger, typical sex role orientation (Friedheim & Borstelmann, 1963; Henderson, 1980). The total father-child relationship, not simply the perception of the father as being dominant in one area of family or parental functioning, is an important variable in the cultivation of child sex-role orientation.

The cultivation of leadership, responsibility, and social maturity in adolescent boys has also been demonstrated to be closely linked to a fathering style that is nurturant and limit-setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1961). Hetherington (1972) notes that father absence before the age of five years appears to have a negative effect upon masculine development in boys (Hetherington, 1972). The age of onset of father-absence also seems to be a crucial variable (Biller, 1972; Hetherington, 1972) with the age of 4 or 5 years in boys seeming to be the crucial point. That is to say, the effect of father-absence for a boy, is somewhat less if it occurs after the age of five years. Santroch (1970) found that boys whose fathers are absent before the age of two years were less trusting, less industrious, and demonstrated more feelings of inferiority than boys whose father-absence commenced between the ages of three and five years. This age factor was clearly demonstrated by Wallerstein and Kelly (1976) who showed that developmental stage was a crucial factor influencing the reactions of children to separation from their fathers.

The sex role adjustment and orientation of girls is affected by fathers somewhat differently (Biller, 1982). Fathers are more likely than mothers to show a clear-cut double-standard by how they respond to their sons and daughters (Biller & Meredith, 1974) with fathers typically regarding their daughters as more fragile and discouraging their physical robustness. Traditional femininity, with its hallmarks of passivity and dependence, has been shown to be negatively associated with psychological adjustment (Bordwick, 1971). If a father holds a traditional view of femininity, his interactions with his daughter will likely foster qualities within her that fit this view. Hetherington (1972) found father-absence prior to the age of five years to be associated with an increase in the likelihood of girls having later interpersonal adjustment difficulties. This was presumably because of a lack of father affirmation regarding expectations for femine behavior. Fathers regarded by their sons and daughters as masculine tend to have children who perceive themselves as being appropriately feminine or masculine (Heilbrun, 1965). A recent finding relating to the father's influence on the sex role development of his children notes that children who are secure in their sex-role orientations (an outcome of paternal and other influences) adopt the contemporary, social, cultural sex role model, not necessarily the father's ideal sex role orientation (Baruch & Barnett, 1983; Radin & Sagi, 1982). The security of a father's own sex role identity, then, seems to have a security affect upon the sex role identity development of his children.

Cognitive Development. Fathers also play an important role in the cognitive development of their children. Kimball (1952) noted that underachieving boys had very inadequate relationships with their fathers. The sons of dominating, overcontrolling, or unavailable fathers had depressed academic achievement scores, despite high intelligence. Another paternal influence found to depress the academic functioning of boys was having fathers who themselves felt inadequate or thwarted (Grunebaum, Harwitz, Prentice & Sperry, 1962). Families in which fathers are dominated by mothers who undermine their attempts to demonstrate competence also adversely affect the sex-role development and academic confidence of boys (Biller, 1972). Paternal involvement in terms of interest and encouragement also strongly affects the academic achievement of children (Solomon, 1969). Radin (1981) noted that the quality and quantity of father-child (son) interactions was strongly associated with intellectual functioning. In an earlier study, Radin (1976) also noted that paternal nurturance (defined as seeking out the child in a positive manner, asking information of the child, meeting the child's needs) was more highly associated with higher intelligence test scores than was general, non-nurturant contact with the father.

The absence of fathers seems to have a negative affect upon the cognitive functioning of children (Biller, 1981a; Santrock, 1972; Shinn, 1978). Blanchard and Biller (1971) noted that father-absent children (especially boys) were "consistently handicapped" in language, reading comprehension, and mathematical skills. The physical or emotional unavailability of absent fathers seems to have a detrimental effect upon the cognitive functioning of children (Johnson, 1975) especially upon boys (Hetherington, 1978; Radin, 1981). Father absence was cited by Bronfenbrenner (1967) as often being a major factor contributing to a disadvantaged environment. This may be because of several interrelated features such as the economic security associated with father presence, the potential for the added stimulation provided by two involved parents, and a less stressful, more emotionally secure home environment (Lamb, 1986). A similar detrimental influence upon the cognitive development of daughters was found to occur when attentive fathers reinforced the feminine stereotype of passivity and dependency (Biller, 1974).

When fathers are absent or otherwise unavailable to their children they are not available to help cultivate the cognitive and other developmental capacities of their children. What seems to give fathers salience vis a vis the cognitive development of their children is the quality of their fatherly relationship with them, not their qualities as a man (Biller, 1971; Lamb, 1981; Radin, 1982). Johnson (1975) and Honzik (1967) note that autonomy, independence, achievement, and creativity were evident in children who were recipients of high paternal expectations expressed in the context of a warm father-child relationship. On the other hand, paternal hostility and restrictiveness have been found to dampen the cognitive development of children (Hurley, 1967; Lamb et al., 1987; Radin, 1976). Such an outcome might be expected as hostility and restrictiveness could affect a child's self-confidence or self-concept, thus limiting their exploration of the world and their vision of themselves as learners (Purkey, 1984).

In reviewing the evidence of father influence upon the cognitive development of children, it is important to note that specific fathering behaviors occur within the wider sociocultural context in relation to features such as maternal influences, child-characteristics, the influence of peer group values, and the enculturation of fathers (Biller, 1982; Lamb & Oppenheim, 1989). These factors all combine to generate the sociocultural environment within which the father-child relationship develops. The degree and character of nurturance available to children is dependent upon the synergesis of these sociocultural features.

Personal and Social Development. When considering the aspects of personal and social development important to the child, areas such as interpersonal relations, self-concept, anxiety, impulsiveness, moral development, psychopathology, and delinquency are salient. How well a child succeeds in achieving mastery in some of these areas or their resistance to detrimental forces seems to be highly influenced by the presence of fathers and by the quality of the father-child relationship (Reuter & Biller, 1973). This influence begins early and is exerted in the social contexts of the social environments created by parental responses to their children (Roggman & Peery, 1989). Reuter and Biller (1973) state that high paternal nurturance and moderate to high paternal availability, are related positively to high personality adjustment scores. It has also been observed that children, especially boys, exposed to non-nurturant available fathers are worse off in terms of their personal and social development than children who have non-nurturant, unavailable fathers (Biller, 1974c; Lamb, et al., 1986).

Father warmth, interest in, and participation with children are important in the development of a child's self-confidence and self-esteem (Sears, 1970). Coopersmith (1967) found that father involvement in limit-setting was associated with high self-esteem in children. Father nurturance and availability enable children to both benefit developmentally and to model these nurturant fathering behaviors. This modelling is important in that it has been noted that children currently have a lack of nurturant males and fathers to model (Biller, 1982; Lamb, 1986). This absence of models has implications for the development of the sex role identities of children and may be a conservative force in the process of generating future nurturant fathers. This lack of models of father nurturance may be contributing to the role confusion experienced by many males today (Day & Mackey, 1986; Lamb, 1986).

Block (1971) found that males who achieved successful interpersonal and emotional adjustment came from homes in which both fathers and mothers were highly involved and responsible in their upbringing. Father presence also seems to positively influence the impulse control of children (Santroch & Wohlford, 1970). Children deprived of their fathers before the age of two years had a much greater difficulty in delaying their gratification than did children who were not father deprived or were deprived of their fathers later in life. Father absence has also been associated with having difficulties in making long-term commitments (Suedfield, 1967).

Regarding moral development, Hoffman (1971) noted that father-absent boys scored consistently lower than father-present boys on a variety of moral indexes. The dynamic created by father discipline and a high degree of father affection is highly associated with a child's awareness of right and wrong (Moulton et al., 1966). The combination of firm limits, affection, and responsiveness seems to influence children toward becoming sensitive to others and moral. Hoffman (1971, 1981) noted that weak identification with fathers by boys whose fathers were present was related to conscience development that was less than that in boys who strongly identified with their fathers. Biller (1982) concludes that "children who have a warm relationship with a competent father who can constructively set limits for them are much more likley to develop a realistic internal locus of control" (p. 712).

Herzog and Sudin (1970) noted that father absence, as it contributed to a lack of family cohesiveness, was a contributing factor associated with juvenile delinquency. It has also been noted that the quality of father-child relationship is related to delinquent behaviors (Biller, 1974; Bandura and Walters, 1959). Gregory (1965) noted that boys living with their mothers following father loss are much more likely to become delinquent than were boys who lived with their fathers following mother-loss, indicating that father deprivation is a more salient condition in the development of delinquency than is mother deprivation.

Regarding interpersonal relationships, fathers have been found to affect the level of social confidence of their children. For example, infants deprived of the opportunity of contact with their fathers have been found to be more anxious when separated from their mothers (Biller, 1974c; Spelke et al., 1973). Fathers have been described as providing an attachment figure that serves as both a foundation for the child's eventual individuation from their mother and as a proving ground for the development of other social relationships (Muir, 1989; Pacella, 1989). Inadequate peer relationships are associated with inadequate father-child relationships or the lack of such a relationship (Leiderman, 1959). Again, the existence of a warm, positive, nurturant father-child relationship seems to provide boys with a basis for positive peer interaction (Rutherford & Mussen, 1968; Lamb, 1986). Relatedly, boys from mother-dominated homes were found to have more difficulties influencing their peers, were less self-confident, and were more impulsive than were boys who had access to a warm father-son relationship (Hoffman, 1961). Boys and girls who have access to a warm and nurturing father are more secure in their interactions with members of the opposite sex than are children who have been deprived of this opportunity (Biller, 1974c; Hetherington, 1972).

Again, the earlier the onset of father absence, the greater seems to be the degree of adjustment difficulty experienced by the child (Biller, 1972; Jacobson & Ryder, 1969).

Several studies converge on the issue of paternal inadequacy as a major factor in the etiology of psychopathology in childhood (Block, 1969; O'Loughlin, 1984; Ross, 1979). Children who demonstrate difficulties in impulse control and aggressiveness frequently have fathers who are dictatorial and controlling (Becker, Peterson, Luria, Shoemaker & Hellmer, 1962). Children with low self-concepts were often found to have fathers who were insensitive and dictatorial (Becker et al., 1962). Liverant (1959) found that disturbed children were often fathered by men who responded in a negative fashion on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). Trunnell (1968) found a relationship between the severity of child psychopathology and the length and age of onset of father absence: the longer the absence and the earlier the age of onset, the more severe the psychopathology. Above average rates of father-absence have been associated with personality disturbance, inadequate moral development (Biller, 1982; Friedman, 1967) and neurosis and drug addiction (Rosenberg, 1969; Wood & Duffy, 1966). These findings indicate that the mere presence of fathers in families does not guarantee beneficial outcomes for children. Rather, the influence of fathers is mitigated by the qualities that they bring to the father-child relationship.

There is data indicating that the reasons for father absence influence its affect upon children. Father absence due to death does not seem to be as developmentally detrimental as that due to desertion, divorce, or separation (Hetherington, 1972; Santrock, 1972). It would be very interesting to understand why this might be so. Consideration of some tradition-based consequences of father absence (such as lowered socio-economic status) is important in considering or interpreting the effects of father-absence (Lamb, 1986). Class differences in the effects of father-absence may be explained by a greater number of physical and psychological resources being available to middle-class families than are usually available to lower-class families (Biller, 1981). This is a clear example of a social variable mitigating the effects of father-absence.

Adequate personality development seems to be associated with families in which both mother and father are perceived by their children as respresenting adequate feminine and masculine roles (Biller, 1982; Lamb, 1986). Father absence and mother dominance in families have been found to be negatively associated with many indexes of psychological health (O'Loughlin, 1984; Schum, 1970). The absence of fathers seems to disrupt the sociocultural environment of the family, thereby compromising the nurturant environment available to children.

## Summary of the Literature Review

This review of the literature related to the influence of fathers on the development of their children has revealed that fathers can be important in the cultivation of the psychosocial potentials of their children. The saliency of fathers to their children is dependent upon a variety of factors. Included amoung these are physical and psychological availability, responsiveness, and skill level. Traditionally, fathers have nurtured their children by indirect means such as breadwinning. Increasingly, fathers are being requested to become more directly involved in the direct caregiving of their children by a social structure that is experiencing change in the area of family structure, the role of women, and the economy. Father involvement is a potential source of nurturance to children who, because of the above changes are, as a group, experiencing a decline in the number of sources of nurturance available to them. The absence of fathers from families, rather than directly causing deficits in child development, can be viewed as a disruption of the nurturant social ecology that surrounds the child. Father absence can be equivocated with environmental disadvantage, as an example of what occurs when the social ecology surrounding children is disrupted by the removal of a key element. The results of these absence studies, when contextualized, can potentially reveal much about father nurturance.

Studies also reveal that fathers are capable of attaching to their infants. Correspondingly, infants attach to their fathers when they are available as attachment figures. The traditional exclusion of fathers from developmental research may be due to the same forces that keep them from being available to their children as attachment figures. Fathers were not studied because they were not available to study. This unavailability can be postulated to be due to basic biological deficiencies inherent in the human male. Alternatively, father absence from the realm of direct, nurturant child care can be postulated to stem from sociocultural prescriptions for the father's role.

There is also indication that the developmental salience of fathers is highly influenced by personal qualities such as warmth, psychological and physical availability, competence, and attentiveness to their children. These qualities, so necessary to the development of a nurturant father-child relationship, do exist in fathers but also seem to be highly dependent upon the sociocultural environment for their cultivation and expression. This same sociocultural environment may not be preparing men to take on the responsibilities of nurturant child-rearing. The consideration of the social factors shaping the character of contemporary fatherhood will be considered in the following chapter.

## Limiting Features of Previous Research

The research to date has begun to answer some questions about father nurturance, but many gaps remain. It is only recently that researchers have begun to give more than lipservice to the investigation of the sociocultural factors that bear upon the involvement of fathers in direct, nurturant childcare. Some research efforts have been flawed by design methodologies that have failed to acknowledge the sociocultural embeddedness of the father's role (Lamb, 1986; Pedersen, 1976). Other efforts were premised upon a paradigm that assumed a biological basis for the absence of fathers in the direct, nurturant care of their young (Bowlby, 1958; Ainsworth, 1969). This position legitimized a view of fathers as developmental non-entities and failed to acknowledge the influence of sociocultural factors upon the phenomenon being observed. Father-absence studies looked for causal relationships and therefore revealed a rather unidimensional, decontextualized picture of the father's influence (e.g., Biller, 1982).

The relative absence of research into the influence of sociocultural factors upon father participation in the nurturant care of children is due to rhetoric outpacing serious analysis of the question. Although the characteristics of the "new, nurturant father" are well identified, there is little evidence that the existence of men with these qualities is on the rise (Lewis & O'Brien, 1987; Lamb, 1986). The resistance being met by this attempt to alter the role of men may be due to the degree to which the father's role is galvanized to present social structures and functions.

Research efforts into this complex area have been hampered by the complexity of the father's role and by the lack of research paradigms that did not account for this complexity. Also, it may be that these efforts have been thwarted by the fact that a change in fathers toward more nurturant involvement would have major implications for the existing social structure. It can be assumed that there would be resistance exerted by the existing social order when faced with such a demand.

## Research Question

The purpose of this study was to identify the social and cultural influences on the development and expression of nurturant fathering behaviors. The major research question asks: "Do sociocultural factors in fact influence father participation in direct child nurturance?"

# CHAPTER 4

## Roots of Contemporary Fatherhood

The importance of nurturant fathering to the cultivation of the psychosocial potentials of children is now widely acknowledged. The recent upsurge in research in this area, besides establishing many specific areas of father contribution, has served to reveal that fathering occurs within sociocultural contexts (Draper, 1990; Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1987; Pleck, 1983). Also revealed is that sociocultural factors greatly influence the biological underpinnings of nurturant fathering (Draper, 1990; Mead, 1953). Overt fathering behaviors, then, can be viewed as reflections of social expectations and training that are either supported or discouraged by existing social structures, institutions, or practices. Reigning cultural ideas influence the conceptualization of the father's role (Draper, 1990) and shape developmental interpretations (Rogoff & Morelli, 1989). This power of culture to shape social roles and interpretations of developmental data is particularly evident when examining the father's role.

The role of the father, much more than the role of the mother, is vulnerable to changes in the sociocultural milieu (Pruett, 1989). The social vulnerability of this role is evident when it is examined longitudinally as this reveals changes in father functioning that correspond to changes in the sociocultural milieu (Pleck, 1987). As these forces and values emerge they influence the contemporary role of the father, influencing its functions and expressions. For example, structural changes in the contemporary family (e.g., the increased employment of mothers) offer fathers the opportunity for increased salience in the cultivation of their children. The actualization of this potential seems, however, to be dependent upon supportive social changes that would facilitate increased father involvement. To understand the challenges presently facing the development of nurturant fatherhood, it is important to understand the characteristics of the contemporary father role.

### Contemporary North American Fatherhood Defined

For the purposes of this study, contemporary fatherhood will be defined as the embodiment of father qualities celebrated by the culture at large as being father functions. Contemporary North American fatherhood is composed of central role elements that, because of their initial identification with the father's role and their importance in the sociocultural milieu, have become galvanized to the father role. These elements continue to influence the father's role because they are products of the enculturation process and because they are supported by the social and institutional practices that surround them. These central, characteristic elements of North American fatherhood are identified and discussed later in this chapter.

## Antecedents of Father Involvement

A consistent picture of fathers revealed in history and in anthropological data is that human males are not commonly associated with the task of primary infant care-giving (Cohen, 1987; Katz & Konner, 1981; O'Kelly, 1986). The absence of fathers from direct child nurturance may well be an outcome of the peripheral focus that typifies the father's role in most human societies. This peripheral focus may explain why the male role is intimately intertwined with society's institutional structures (Franklin, 1988; O'Kelly, 1986) and, it may be hypothesized, lies behind the social vulnerability of the father's role.

The father's role is influenced by several sociocultural factors. In order to more completely understand this role it is important to consider the contributions made by biological and sociocultural forces, the bi-directional interactions of these elements, and the characteristics of the child. These factors will now be considered individually.

### Biological Influences

The origins of a lack of direct male care-giving may well lie in the biological foundations of human kind. That human culture has evolved or premised itself upon these biological foundations is not a new thought (Lamb et al., 1987; Rossi, 1984). Lamb and his associates (1987) note that "There probably are biogenetically determined sex differences in behavioral propensities" (p. 114). These researchers go on to state that there is no reason to believe that these behavioral propensities are deterministic, that they preclude father involvement in nurturant, child-rearing activities. This view is also shared by O'Kelly (1986).

Given the inherent differences between human males and females it is easy to speculate that the prototype nuclear family has its roots in the sexual dimorphism of the human male and female. The realities of menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, breast-feeding, a smaller frame and muscle mass, and prolonged infant dependency, inclined the human female to be home-centered and child-oriented. The hormonal preparation of women for reproduction and the nurturant care of their infants is something not shared by men. On the other hand, the human male became endowed with features that suited him to be more peripherally oriented, to partake of activities that increased the comfort and chances for survival of mate, offspring, and the wider social group. These endowments included superior visual-spatial abilities, larger size and muscle mass, a larger vital capacity, and superior throwing abilities. These biologically-based realities initially channeled parents into distinctive child rearing gender roles (Rossi, 1984).

It may be assumed that the root of father separation from direct child-care activities is derived from human sexual dimorphism. It can also be assumed that social structures and practices have been predicated upon these biological realities and that this has served to "systematically" deprive human males of the opportunity, expectation, support, and training required to successfully nurture children. This systematic exclusion from the realm of child nurturance exists in spite of the finding that "both sexes possess the ability to nurture the young" (Fogel et al., 1986). The absence of fathers in the direct, nurturant care of their children seems to be highly related to sociocultural influences. The comparative absence of mothers from the realm of paid work is also a product of these same influences.

It is, then, the biological substrate that provides the basis for the potentials that are or are not cultivated by the sociocultural environment (Lamb et al., 1987). Lamb (1976) noted that the influence of sociocultural factors increases up the phylogenetic scale and that these factors are at least as important as biological influences in the regulation of parental behavior. Tyson (1982) notes that the gender role identity of fathers "develops from a confluence of several factors including innate biological and instinctual forces" and "culturally determined, learned behavior" (pp. 175-176). Clarke-Stewart (1977) has concluded that all fathers require to manifest their "potentially equal competence to nurture" is social support. It is from this biosocial foundation that the role of the contemporary Western father has developed. Social and biological realities both enable and limit the range of behavioral options available to parents. The social and physical ecologies present both limits and options to the parents functioning within them. In human beings, biological factors can transcend the "hard-wired determinants of behavior to include the tendencies and "behavioral predispositions" of organisms to make decisions (Lamb et al., 1987). This enables adaptive responses to the social environment, a strong characteristic of the human species.

Biological factors influencing fathers can be viewed from both evolutionary and proximate perspectives. Based upon evolutionary principles and upon the initial, biologically-based differences in the reproductive roles of men and women, it can be logically assumed that there would be sex differences in human parental involvement. Inclusive fitness is achieved differently by males and females, according to evolutionary theory. Females, because of the time and effort required by pregnancy, delivery, and postnatal care, ensure inclusive fitness by ensuring the survival of their offspring. Males have evolved to ensure their inclusive fitness by ensuring the survival of their offspring by taking on a protective and provisioning role (Lamb, et al., 1987). These gender-based strategies for inclusive fitness may also have served to ensconce males and females in their respective roles vis a vis child rearing.

From the point of view of behavioral ecology, parental behavior is designed to maximize parental fitness within the limits offered by the physical and socioeconomic options of the environment. Parental behavior, then, must be evaluated with an acknowledgement of the supports and constraints offered by the biological, social, and physical environments surrounding the parent. The evolution of our own sociocultural environment now affords the opportunity for parents to reevaluate their roles vis a vis the rearing of their children. For example, technological developments such as infant formulas and bottle feeding enable fathers to participate in nurturant activities that were hitherto the exclusive domain of mothers. Such sociocultural developments have enormous potential to enable the increased participation of fathers in the cultivation of their children.

As the purpose of this study is to identify the sociocultural influences upon the development of nurturant fathering behavior, the discussion of specific biological influences will be kept to a minimum and accepted as a constant. This discussion will now turn to the sociocultural influences upon father nurturance.

## Sociocultural Influences

The socio-historical roots of contemporary North American fatherhood lie in the patriarchal traditions of ancient Greece, Rome, and Israel (Lynn, 1974). Over time, the power of this patriarchal role became diminished and limited because of the influence of changes such as the increased rights of women and children. By the beginning of the nineteenth century many social forces were emerging in North America that served to diminish the centrality of the fathers role within the family. These forces were: democratization, the industrial revolution, the feminist movement, and immigration (Lynn, 1974). These forces altered the father's role by forcing society to re-evaluate it in the context of an emerging egalitarian milieu and changing economic realities. The intimate relationship between the social milieu and the father's role is demonstrated by a close examination of the enculturation outcomes of males.

Enculturation. Studies have revealed that boys and girls under the age of six years do not demonstrate differences in the way that they nurture younger children (Fogel, Melson, & Mistry, 1986). However, by age six years it has been demonstrated that boys diverge from girls in this respect by becoming more indirect and peripheral in their approach to the nurturance of younger children. This sex-role difference seemingly has its roots in the different training and social expectations held for boys and girls. Generally speaking , girls are prepared to be home-centered and to not be involved in paid work. Boys are prepared to be active, instrumental, and peripherally oriented. These enculturation differences can be viewed as preparation for future parental role expectations and functions (Boudreau, 1990). This differential training is supported by the sociocultural environment which requires that parents fulfill expected and interrelated functions.

Lamb (1986) cites four determinants of father involvement. These are: motivation, skills and self-confidence, support, and institutional practices. Each of these four areas is highly influenced by sociocultural elements.

Motivation. For men to become nurturantly involved in the rearing of their children they must be motivated to do so (McBride, 1989). A central impediment to the development of a higher general level of motivation in men has been the existence of traditional roles that have discouraged the participation of men in nurturant child-care activities (Lamb & Oppenheim, 1989; Parke & Tinsley, 1981; Pleck, 1983). Recently, North American society has been re-evaluating the traditional involvement of men in this area. There has been increased media coverage and a general interest in the "new fatherhood." These have combined to make the consideration of a departure from the traditional father role and the adoption of a more direct, nurturing role more acceptable.

Although the "new fatherhood" is being touted in some circles, the traditional societal association of child-care with femininity and the enculturation of this belief into boys and girls serves to sustain the idea that child-care is unmasculine (Franklin, 1988; Lamb, 1986; Russell & Radin, 1983). Attitudinal barriers such as these act as a conservative force in changing the motivational levels of men regarding their involvement in nurturant child-care activities.

Skill and Confidence. Another element found to affect the involvement of fathers in the cultivation of their children is their skill level and degree of self-confidence in the area of nurturant child-care. Most boys in North American society are not given opportunities to become knowledgeable and skillful in the area of child nurturing (Klinman, 1986). In considering this, it is important to remember that a core, traditional goal of enculturation for men in North America is the characteristic of competence (Hsu, 1983). Men are expected to be capable in any situation that arises. This expectation may be at the root of much of the resistance being shown by men ill prepared to become more nurturantly involved with their children. McHale and Huston (1984) noted that father child-care skill levels prior to the birth of their child were highly predictive of the degree of a father's post-birth involvement in the care of his child. A lack of child-care skills, the natural outcome of a lack of social training and support for the role of nurturer, combined with the expectation that males should demonstrate competence, inclines men to avoid demonstrating incompetence in this area. This avoidance may occur even when men are motivated to be nurturantly involved with their children (Lamb, 1986; McBride, 1989). Lamb (1986) claims that fathers first need to develop confidence in their dealings with children. The development of this confidence, however, would most logically be achieved via an enculturation that encouraged men to practice nurturant skills as children.

It has been shown that first-time fathers demonstrate as much competence with their newborns as do first-time mothers (Lamb, 1981). Because of differing role expectations for men and women, men are able to withdraw from the challenge of learning child-care skills while mothers, who are expected and often required to care for their children, must rise to the challenge and learn these skills (Lamb, 1986). A sensitivity to infant cues and signals are also an important aspects of nurturant care-giving as this enables the child to have its needs met and to feel secure and understood (Tronick, 1982). The development of this sensitivity is dependent upon fathers (parents) being in regular contact with their infants (Ainsworth, 1978; Sroufe & Waters, 1977; Tronick, 1982).

Spousal Support. In order for men to become more involved in child-rearing, they will require a variety of supports to help them to counteract the effects of enculturation and other facets of sociocultural bias. A lack of support for increased father involvement has been discovered to reside in the behavior of mothers. Pleck (1982) and Quinn & Staines (1979) independently noted that approximately 70 percent of women surveyed did not want their husbands to be more involved with their children. This, of course, reflects the enculturation of women to their role, and may indicate that higher father involvement would threaten the mother-biased power balance within families. These survey results could also be a reflection of a reluctance in mothers to turn over the care of their children to an obviously less prepared spouse (Lamb & Oppenheim, 1989). In essence, a source of mother predominance and power (status) may be threatened by the increased participation of fathers (Lamb, 1986; Parke & Tinsley, 1981). This societal dynamic, itself a product of enculturation, may take on added significance when it is considered that mother support for increased father involvement in child-rearing has been shown to be a crucial variable in the actual increase of father participation (Power & Parke, 1984; Parke, 1986).

A key point about increased father involvement is that, to be successful, both father and mother preferences and attitudes must be taken into account. Differences in the sex role ideology of spouses can create a great deal of stress, ostensibly because of the resulting role and responsibility confusion (Hock, 1980; Tomlinson, 1987). The stress generated by this role confusion has been cited as being a factor in the high rate of marriage dissolution amoung couples who initially demonstrated an increased degree of father involvement (Russell, 1983; Radin & Goldsmith, 1986). Father involvement, therefore, is not always, in and of itself, desireable (Lamb, 1986). It must be supported by compatible spousal ideology and endorsed socioculturally.

Groundwork in terms of father skill improvement and mother support is important in the quest to achieve the goal of increased, nurturant father involvement. This training and support are especially important given the ambivalence and confusion that surrounds the issue of increased father involvement in current North American society.

Institutional Influences. Paternal involvement is also affected by institutional practices. These practices require and elicit certain prescribed behaviors from the human beings that deal with them. There seems to be an intimate relationship between human behavior and institutional structures. This seems to be especially so with regard to males and, hence, the father role. An example might be the following: the economic structure that is related to the father's traditional role as breadwinner that serves to impose barriers to father involvement with children. These institutional factors do not operate in isolation. They are intimately connected to other factors such as the forces of enculturation which prepare individuals to accept and meet the demands of institutions that are premised upon these same values. For example, Pleck (1983) noted that working mothers and fathers demonstrate behavioral differences in how they spend their non-work hours. Mothers were found to devote about 40 minutes of each non-work hour to family work while fathers devoted less than 20 minutes of each non-work hour to the family. Factors other than institutional impediments are at work when such differences are noted. The elements discussed above can be viewed as being highly interdependent. They are also sociocultural by-products.

## Elements of Traditional Fatherhood

Given the sensitivity of the father's role to sociocultural influences, a look at the historical and social climates to which the role has been exposed during the past two hundred years should enable the understanding of characteristics found in the contemporary father. Several elements of a unique nature combined to influence the development of the father's role in colonial North

America. These elements were: the rejection of old world traditions; the Puritan religion; the democratic movement and; the frontier environment. These will each be discussed in the following section.

Rejection of Old World Traditions. From its inception, American society was premised upon the notion of rebellion against the paternalistic governmental traditions of Europe. Along with this rebellion came a suspicion of authority and the rejection of traditions that had provided stability to the countries of Europe for centuries. These characteristics greatly influenced the development of the father's role in North America. Unhinged from tradition, the father's role was able to be flexible and to accomodate to the unique demands of a new social environment (Demos, 1982). This social environment was based upon a strong Puritan morality, democracy, and a seemingly limitless physical frontier. In a sense the father's role reflected these guiding social values which, over time, combined and interacted to remove fathers from the position of having a direct developmental influence upon their children, peripheralizing his developmental role. A uniquely American brand of "rugged individualism" arose in this sociocultural environment (Hsu, 1983). The qualities of this role (self-containment, self-reliance, emotional aloofness, a peripheral, material orientation) (Hsu, 1983) are the antithesis of the qualities required of the nurturant father (physical and emotional availability, responsiveness). This cultural ideal, embedded in the structures of the culture that created it, makes the adoption of a nurturant father role difficult because it orients men away from the goal of becoming more nurturant.

The Democratic Milieu. In the mid eighteenth century, the rising tide of democracy served to shed the yolk of a paternalistic and authoritarian tradition. In doing so fathers were freed to find their niche in a very novel sociocultural environment that offered few reference points or models. The authority of individuals was supreme and this freedom enabled fathers to turn outwards to deal with a frontier that offered endless possibilities, challenges, and that required them to be externally vigilant.

The Frontier. The unique frontier environment offered by the new world had an enormous influence upon the role of the father. The opportunities seemed boundless and the individual was constrained only by his own limitations. Being the provider and protector took on an increased emphasis in physical and sociocultural environments that required many skills and personal resources. The task of independently wresting a living from a hostile environment was a facet of the male role definition that seems to have been galvanized to the core of American fatherhood, perpetuating his function as breadwinner and making the adoption of an active, nurturant father role difficult.

Consequently, the role of breadwinner remains a central feature of North American fatherhood.

## Characteristics of the New World Father

Because of the unique sociocultural conditions that existed in colonial North America, the role of fathers was able to shed some of its European character, thereby becoming free to adapt to a new set of sociocultural conditions. This was especially the case in what was to become the United States. Guiding forces in this unique environment are a distrust of authority, a democratic spirit that celebrated the individual, a strong sense of personal rightness and authority, and a sense of self-sufficiency, of making one's own way (Hsu, 1983). The qualities of the father's role include strength, competence, wisdom, dependability, and stability (Maxwell, 1976). These qualities are all applied toward the father's primary goal of breadwinning or as "the first and last line of defense in the family unit's war to wrest its needs from the environment" (Maxwell, 1976, p. 388). This attitude of "war" toward the environment, and its accompanying peripheral vigilence, has been a key reason for the slow movement of fathers toward a more nurturant participation in child-care. The unique frontier environment of colonial North America also enabled the theme of self reliance to be galvanized to the list of culturally desired father attributes.

## The Sociocultural Vulnerability of the Father's Role

A review of the evolution of the North American father's role over the past two hundred and fifty years, reveals that it is a role that is, much more than is the role of mothers, highly influenced by the sociocultural backdrop and the historical realities surrounding it (Cath et al., 1989; Demos, 1982; Parke & Tinsley, 1984). Brackett (1982) noted that the nature of fatherhood is problematical in that it does not have a fundamental, unchallengeable base. This lack of "base" may be at the root of the vulnerability of the father role. Demos (1982) suggests that fatherhood is a "cultural invention" which is "deeply rooted in contemporaneous structures of society and culture, of belief and custom" (p. 444). This relationship to social and cultural structures may be a central factor contributing to the lack of the "unchallengeable base" mentioned by Brackett (1982).

Historically, the father's role has evolved through a position of moral pre-eminence and respect, to a position typified by confusion, derision, and social mockery, through to a position characterized by tension and confusion (Pleck, 1987). In order to gain an understanding of the present bid to ensconce fathers in a position of developmental potency vis a vis their children, it is important to acknowledge both the historical antecedents and the influence of the present sociocultural milieu in the development and expression of nurturant fathering behaviors.

Evidence of the Evolution of the Father's Role

In the new world environment, with its unique sociocultural elements, the role of the father remained subject to the forces around it. Pleck (1987) commented that in American history the father has been expressed by four dominant themes. These themes are: Moral Teacher; Breadwinner; Sex-Role Model; and the New Nurturant Father. Pleck advocates that a historical perspective provides a way to understand both the roots and the challenges of contemporary fatherhood. This knowledge should be useful in an attempt to understand the impediments to increased father participation in the cultivation of child potentials.

The Moral Teacher. The new-world North American father was initially responsible for the moral training of his children. This involved preparing them for life by ensuring that they could read and thereby have access to the Bible and other religious writings. This pedagogical role was limited to the purpose of enabling children to have access to written sources of moral training. Pleck (1987) noted that while the father's role was given social preeminence, it remained instrumental with regard to involvement with his children. Day to day nurturant care-taking remained in the hands of mothers.

The Breadwinner. With the arrival of the Industrial Revolution the father's role as moral teacher was deemhasized and his chief responsibility became that of providing the home with material wealth. This major societal change served to remove fathers from the home and to shift parental roles. Mothers came to be acknowledged as being the dominant child-rearing figures in the home environment while fathers became more peripherally and indirectly involved. This was also a period in history during which gender ideology changed. Women, who fomerly were regarded as being weaker vessels from a moral standpoint, were suddenly regarded as being pure and morally superior to men. This relative moral purity elevated women to a status suitable for the raising of children and helped established the subsequent preeminence of the mother-infant dyad in psychotherapy, child development, education, and family law (Pleck, 1987). These changes for both men and women indicate how sociocultural forces influence human behavior and indicate the interrelatedness of social roles.

Demos (1982) noted that, with the advent of the industrial revolution the "activity of fatherhood was now sited outside one's immediate household" (p. 427). Being a father now meant being away from children for a good part of each working day. Enabling his family to acquire consumer goods and to have security was the primary function of the breadwinning father. In this new role, the father's authority was reduced in that he was only brought into family matters when the mother's authority faltered. The day to day flow of family life was therefore lost to fathers. Consequently, as a group, fathers have lost a sense of emotional involvement and a sense of comfort, closeness, and relationship with their children (Pleck, 1987).

The Sex-Role Model. The loss of father contact with children due to the demands of the breadwinning role placed mothers in a pre-eminent role with regards to influencing their children. This imbalance or "matrist bias" created conditions in which "excessive mothering" came to be seen as a threat to the psychological well-being of children. Post World War Two America was a period of transition in which the critique of mothering reached a high pitch. This criticism of mothering enabled the consideration of fathers as important in the sex-role development of their children. The war had also changed the role of women as many had entered paid employment for the first time. These changes put much pressure upon the post-war family structure. A consequence of this pressure was a rise in the divorce rate.

A concern also arose in the post war years about the weak and passive involvement of fathers even when they were present in families. The "domesticated," ineffectual father, divorced from his historic functions of patriarch, frontiersman, and adventurer, became an object of derision

(Day & Mackey, 1986; Pleck, 1987). The father role was adrift and at the mercy of the forces of sociocultural changes. In the 1950's, the uninvolved or absent father became associated with high rates of juvenile delinquency. It was felt that mother dominance, coupled with father unavailability, was central in the etiology of insecurity in the male identity. A secure identity was viewed as essential for psychological health and prosocial behavior (Pleck, 1983). Fathers were seen in this phase as "the cultural transmitter of culturally based conceptions of masculinity and feminity" (Biller, 1971). Delinquency was seen as being the result of the failure of fathers to induce a secure identity in their children. According to Vogel and Bell (1968), children whose fathers took on "the mothering functions both tangibly and emotionally while mother is preoccupied with her career can easily gain a distorted image of masculinity and feminity" (p. 586). This perception of the roles of both fathers and mothers did little to advance the cause of increased nurturant father involvement. It also revealed the strong cultural bias of these researchers.

The Nurturant Father. The role of the nurturant father is quite a departure from the three roles discussed previously. Some elements of father nurturance did emerge in the moral teacher and sex-role model roles. These roles did not, however, influence children via direct child-care interactions but rather as distant abstractions. The impetus for developing a father role typified by a more involved, nurturing father stems from several sources. One source is the increasing criticism of the culturally dominant model of the father as primary breadwinner. The developmental deficiencies of this role for fathers, children, and marital relationships are becoming increasingly evident (Franklin, 1988; Hsu, 1983; Jourard, 1969).

Another source of this impetus for change in the father role is that of the Women's Movement, which is influencing the role of women, revealing existing social imbalances, and generating new theories of gender, thereby enabling the broadening of the role of fathers. Also, the growing body of developmental evidence attesting to the potential contributions of fathers to the cultivation of the psychosocial potentials of their children has added weight to the argument that men should become more involved. This potential source of child nurturance is especially important given that, as a group, North American children are able to access a shrinking number of sources of nurturance (Zigler & Heller, 1984).

## A Role in Flux

The social vulnerability of the father's role has meant that fathers, in this present sociocultural environment, are not being prepared to directly contribute to the developmental well-being of their children. Concurrently, fathers are being asked to become more nurturantly involved with their children. This predicament has led to role confusion and has caused a much difficulty not only for fathers but also for children, marriages, and women. On the one hand, men are being asked to be more responsible for the direct rearing of their children. On the other hand, the sociocultural environment, as manifested by social structures, institutions, and enculturation, do not support the demand for increased father involvement. The dominant father themes of the past (moral teacher, breadwinner, sex-role model) still continue to influence contemporary fathers (Demos, 1982; Lamb, 1986; Pleck, 1987). These themes reflect the distant and isolated roles of fathers and demonstrate the influence of sociocultural factors upon the father role. Each of these past father roles reflected a dominant sociocultural theme of their day and required certain, accomodating behaviors from fathers.

The confusion caused by the uncertainty of the father's role in present day North American society runs counter to traditional by-products of male enculturation such as competence, strength, wisdom, and stability. These capacities are expected of men in their extra-familial, breadwinning capacity and in any endeaver undertaken by men (Franklin, 1988; Hsu, 1983). Without sociocultural changes in enculturation practices, institutions, and social structures to support increased father competency, the advancement of this new father role will be slow and, it seems, developmentally costly. As the new role of women expands more rapidly than that of men there will likely be increased tension between the sexes that may manifest itself in higher divorce rates or as higher levels of within-home tension and discord. Both divorce and within-home discord have been shown to be developmentally detrimental to children (Wallerstein, 1989).

The uncertainty regarding the father's role also has implications for society. An increasing number of children growing up without the unique and general contributions of father nurturance, within single parent families, within homes filled with marital discord and role confusion will not be of benefit to society. The tensions associated with this period of role transition demonstrate that the father's role is, in fact, an integral part of a sociocultural network. Change is slow because of the interrelationship and interdependency of sociocultural elements. For example, men are being asked to accomodate or adapt to the changing role of women, which in the present milieu, may increase the risk to children of being undernourished psychosocially. Increased father involvement is one possible way to mitigate the effects of the changing role of women. However, fathers are intimately involved in other aspects of the social milieu which are dependent upon his continued participation.

Change in any aspect of an ecological system affects all other aspects of the system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). With regard to the changing role of women, these "other aspects" include men, children, and the sociocultural structures that are involved in maintaining the old ecology. A change without corresponding support will likely lead to frustration and pressure to reestablish the old order (Franklin, 1988). This is indeed evident when the mandates of contemporary men's rights groups are examined. For example, Men's Rights, Inc. advocates a promen approach with little or no interest in women's issues as a way to deal with what its members feel is an erosion of masculinity in contemporary society. On the other hand, the National Organization for Changing Men (NOCM) seeks to address men's issues in a broader sociocultural context (Franklin, 1988).

### Summary

The exploration of the forces that shape contemporary fathering has revealed a number of interesting things about fathers and their potential to cultivate the psychosocial capacities of their children. First, the father's role is vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the sociocultural forces that surround it. Second, historically fathers have accepted roles that, although developmentally important to their children (ie. moral teacher, breadwinner), were not associated with their day to day, hands-on rearing. This peripheral involvement in child-rearing activities is characterized by provisioning and protection duties that have been mutually exclusive of direct, nurturant child-care activities. Third, this distanced role has been sustained by sociocultural structures, practices, institutions, and enculturation outcomes that reflect key elements of the father's past (and present) role. These role vestiges remain in contemporary social structures and continue to influence the enculturation of contemporary fathers. These vestiges act as a conservative force in the evolution of nurturant fathering and may explain why direct, nurturant child-rearing by North American fathers, far from being the rule, is infrequent.

Making demands for increased father involvement before skills are in place and prior to the existence of sociocultural supports seems likely to create tension in men and in their relationships. This is especially likely given that a major outcome of male enculturation is the display of instrumental competence. It is clear that for fathers to become more involved in the nurturance and cultivation of their children, they must receive support from a variety of sources. These sources include enculturation goals, spousal support, and institutional support, all of which bear upon the motivational level of men. Given that the biological influences upon fathering behavior are highly subject to social influences, it is reasonable to assume that manifestations of the father's role will strongly reflect social values and priorities. If this is the case, it must be acknowledged that changes in this role will require supportive changes in the social environment in which it is embedded. It is to a consideration of the sociocultural forces that bear upon the cultivation and demonstration of nurturant fathering behaviors that this study now turns.

# CHAPTER 5

## Social, Cultural, and Historical Impediments to Nurturant Fathering

The purposes of this chapter are two-fold: (a) to identify and examine the sociocultural factors that impede the development and expression of nurturant fathering in North American society, and (b) to note how these sociocultural elements affect the enculturation and role expression of individual fathers.

All human behavior takes place within the context of the social milieu that surrounds it (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Fathering behaviors are no exception to this. Differences in sex roles from one society to another, or from one historical period to another, attest to the power of social forces upon human behavior. This contention is supported by cross cultural evidence which reveals both commonalities and variations in the father role. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there is some evidence to suggest that the father's role is exceptionally vulnerable to various sociocultural factors. This vulnerability makes the investigation of these influences of paramount importance in the attempt to gain a greater understanding of how fathers are enabled or systematically discouraged from nurturing their infants.

### The Current Situation - Fathers Today

The major functions of the father's child rearing role in North American society today remain peripheral. For example, the function of breadwinning is still identified as a core responsibility of father's role (Cohen, 1987; Lamb, 1986; Pleck, 1983). Even in families where both parents are working full time outside of the home, fathers are identified as primary breadwinners (Lamb, 1986). The breadwinner role is highly identified with fathers because of the long history of protecting and provisioning of families by males (Day & Mackey, 1986; Pleck, 1983). The social functions of protection and providing may well have had their origins in the biological differences that exist between men and women. These differences may have influenced a natural division of labour with regard to child rearing before social and technological conditions developed to a state that enabled the consideration of alternative arrangements (Lamb et al. 1987). There is much evidence, however, that paternal involvement in child rearing is primarily a cultural by-product (Boudreau, 1986; Franklin, 1988) or, as Margaret Mead (1953) said "a social invention." Said another way, the observed degree of paternal involvement in child rearing is primarily the outcome of sociocultural forces that enable, delimit, and otherwise define the father role.

## The Women's Movement

It is only recently that the Women's Movement has called into focus the inequity inherent in the traditional division of family work. For men, response to this call to equity involves a reevaluation of role expectations with regard to their involvement in the nurturant care of their children. Expanding their role from the traditional, indirect forms of nurturing, such as breadwinning, emotional support of mothers, and other peripheral activities, to more directly nurturant child-rearing duties are tasks confronting men today (Lamb, 1986). Men are being asked to fill a new role, that of the "new nurturant father" (Lamb, 1986). This new role belies both the history of the father role and, predictably, the training, enculturation, and social supports currently available to fathers to enable them to achieve this new role (Greenberg 1986; Parke & Beital, 1986; Parke & Tinsley, 1984). Despite the societal pressure and the desire by men to become more nurturantly involved with their children, social changes that would facilitate such involvement have been slow to materialize (Bronstein & Cowan, 1988; Franklin, 1988). It is to the consideration of these sociocultural factors that this chapter now turns.

## Impediments to Increased Father Involvement

Several factors have been identified as affecting the degree of father involvement in the cultivation of the psychosocial potentials of children. These factors are: the socialization of males; the socialization of females; a lack of supportive programs and services for fathers and; a lack of supportive policies by legislators and employers (Cowan &

Bronstein, 1988; Lamb, 1986; Pleck, 1987). The effects of these factors upon father involvement will now be considered.

The Socialization of Males. There is a growing body of literature that attests to the differential enculturation of males and females with regard to their future participation in nurturant child-rearing activities (Cohen, 1987; Franklin, 1988; Lamb, 1977; Moss & Brannen, 1987). Both fathers and mothers initiate and respond to their infants in a manner determined by the sex of the child (Biller, 1981; Roggman & Peery, 1989). Fathers have been noted to play more vigorously with their male children (Power & Parke, 1982; Yogman, 1977) and to behave, much more than mothers, according to sex-role stereotypes when interacting with their children (Langlois & Downs, 1980). It is in this manner that infants receive strong social messages from their primary social environment (their parents) and very early expectations about what is expected of them regarding their future participation in the nurturance of children. These early messages are usually reinforced by the wider social environment because the child's own parents have been enculturated by the same or very similar sociocultural milieu.

Fogel, Melson, and Mistry (1986) have noticed that from the age of two to six years boys and girls do not show substantial differences in how they nurture younger children. After the age of seven years, boys demonstrate a change by becoming more peripheral and nurturing by being helpful or watchful, rather than by providing direct care giving. These differences in the expression of nurturant behavior are also supported by cultural stereotypes and role models that provide support for boys in their pursuit of a male identity (Franklin, 1988). Boys are generally socialized to avoid behaving in a "feminine" manner. In North American culture, the nurturance of children is highly identified with females (Franklin, 1988; Lamb, 1986). This male enculturation acts as an impediment to the participation of males in the realm of nurturant child rearing.

The Socialization of Females. One of the most salient factors bearing upon the involvement of fathers in the rearing of their children is the socialization or sex role ideology of mothers. Females, as a group, continue to be socialized to be at home, to be child-centered, and to not be employed outside the home. The degree of identification that a mother has with the child rearing role, her willingness to share the role, and her perceptions of the capabilities of her spouse to rear children all influence the degree to which individual mothers are willing to involve their spouses. Lamb (1986) notes that mothers act as "gatekeepers" with regard to father access to caregiving opportunities. Maternal qualities interact with father qualities such as availability and sex role ideology to forge the degree of father involvement expressed in individual families.

Survey information indicates that most women (between 60 and 80%) do not want their husbands to be more involved in child rearing (Pleck, 1982; Quinn & Staines, 1979). There are a number of hypothesized reasons for this. One reason may be that women do not want to turn the task over to obviously less prepared spouses. Another reason may be that increased father involvement would be a threat to traditional areas of power (the roles of mother and household manager). Women are not yet being offered an equal opportunity in the work place and until there are some fundamental changes in society that afford women these opportunities, resistance to increased father involvement is likely to continue.

A Lack of Supportive Programs for Fathers. The father's role is a product of socilization, of the enculturation process. As noted above, fathers act in a sociocultural milieu that demands that they function peripherally with regards to the psychosocial cultivation of their children. A gender role norm that dictates a lack of involvement in nurturant care (Berman, 1980) manifests itself in the social structures designed to make the gender role norm functional. There is, therefore, an intimate relationship between typical gender role behaviors and the sociocultural environment within which they operate. Indeed, the behavior of men has been found to be intimately interwoven with society's institutions (Franklin, 1988). If such is the case, it can be reasonably hypothesized that the typical level of nurturant father involvement found in a society reflects the typical social and institutional practices of that society.

Change in fathers toward more active participation in nurturant child rearing will require supportive changes in the sociocultural environment surrounding them. For example, an increase of father participation in the nurturance of their children will require a major shift in the typical gender role identity of fathers. To achieve this, congruent changes in the enculturation process must take place. Without such supportive changes it might be postulated that departures from the typical gender role norm would lead to disequilibrium in the individual and in their immediate sociocultural environment. To assist fathers in becoming more involved with their children, their current, culturally derived deficits must be dealt with. This can be achieved by a variety of programs such as support and information groups designed to deal specifically with these knowledge and experience deficits.

A Lack of Supportive Governmental and Employment Policies. The immediate environment of fathers seems to be most influential in the development and expression of nurturant fathering behavior. The support of the macro social environment is also very influential in this regard. This environment influences fathers directly and influences the immediate social environment that surrounds them (e.g., spouses and peers). Governmental policies are expressions of priorities and values and can affect fathers by facilitating or impeding their opportunities to engage children in nurturant activities. One major source of governmental influence is that of the funding of child and family related programs. A recent criticism of North American governments is that they are not supporting families in this time of change and social transition (Baker, 1990; Keniston, 1977; Lamb, 1986). For example, the increased necessity for and desire of mothers to enter the work force has not been supported by government initiatives to increase the availability and quality of day care settings (Mitchell, 1987).

Support for increased nurturant father involvement also remains a rarity in the work place even though the demands of the workplace have been demonstrated to greatly influence the family environment (Cotterell, 1986). Given the influence of paid work upon fathers, and because of their central identification as breadwinners, it would follow that innovative approaches such as job sharing, flexible hours, and paternity leaves, would do much to facilitate father involvement. The sensitivity of governmental policies and the workplace to the importance of father nurturance would do much to support fathers in becoming more nurturantly involved. The identification of father nurturance as an important social goal would legitimize it by directing resources and energy to it and by raising its profile.

## The Sociocultural Vulnerability of the Father Role

As mentioned above, a longitudinal examination of the past 250 years reveals that the role of the father is vulnerable to changes in the sociocultural milieu (Demos, 1982; Pleck, 1984, 1987). One sociocultural variable that continues to greatly influence the behavior of fathers is their paid work. The paid work of fathers affects their availability to their children and the context of their role (Pleck, 1986). Paid work affects the amount of time available to fathers for child care both by removing fathers for large blocks of time during the day. Shift work also can operate to severely curtail father involvement in child related activities by demanding hours of fathers that are incompatible with family life (Cotterell, 1986; Russell, 1983). Gronseth (1972) observed that men are caught in a "breadwinner trap" that prevents them from becoming more emotionally involved with their children. It is also postulated that men use work as an excuse to mask the more basic reasons for noninvolvement: a lack of skills, a lack of supports, and an enculturation that does not prepare them to identify themselves as nurturers (Cowan & Bronstein, 1988; Lamb, 1986: Russell, 1983).

The question of why are fathers not more nurturantly involved with their children still remains. The answer may be partly found in the observation that the father's role itself is galvanized to functions that are primarily incompatible with a direct, nurturing role (Cohen, 1987; Gronseth, 1972). For example, the function of breadwinning seems to be highly identified with the father's role (Lamb, 1986). Cotterell (1986) noted that the characteristics of fathers' work had direct implications for the child in terms of the demands placed on their mothers and the potential for father involvement. Paternal work patterns have intruded and invaded family life, affecting family relationships and generating stress (Cotterell, 1986; Russell, 1983).

These affects of work are dependent upon other social ecological variables such as the number of resources available in the community, the richness of the mother's social network, and the psychological environment of the family (Bronfenbrenner, Moen, Garbarino, 1984; Cotterell, 1986). The breadwinning role enables fathers to provide materially for their children, to ensure them economic stability, safety, and opportunities. However, to fulfill this central, defining characteristic, fathers must be extraordinarily vulnerable to the demands and realities of the sociocultural environment, especially to economic and work conditions (Cohen, 1987; Cotterell, 1986). To tolerate the demands of work, fathers must believe that they are, primarily, breadwinners and that their direct involvement in the rearing of their children is not important. There seems to be complicity between the socialization outcomes of males and the requirements of the socioeconomic milieu. This "complicity" operates to place fathers in a peripheral role with regard to the direct nurturance of their children.

A recent social development that has implications for fathers, children, and mothers is the increasing number of women who are entering the paid work force. The number of women working before their children are one year of age is on the rise (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1986). A similar trend is evident in Canada ( Mitchell, 1987). Chase-Lansdale and Owen (1987) noted that maternal employment had no affect upon the quality of the mother-infant attachment relationship but a negative affect upon the quality of father-son attachment. This finding was thought to result from how fathers dealt with the stress created by maternal employment, combined with the belief that sons are in less need of nurturance to deal with this stress. Increased maternal employment can be hypothesized to be upsetting the traditional sociocultural ecology by removing mothers from the home setting and focussing their energies upon peripheral activities. Because of the centrality of breadwinning to the father role, it might be hypothesized that many fathers would be threatened by the employment of their wives. The degree of congruence in the sex-role ideology of spouses is an important influence in this matter (Tomlinson, 1987) as are the reasons for maternal employment (Russell, 1983). Without the support of spouse and society, maternal employment could generate stress and, potentially, put the family at risk for providing less than optimal nurturance to its children. The need for sociocultural support of changes in the social structure is evident when events such as increased maternal employment destabilize the existing social order.

The changing role of women and the egalitarian movement are requiring of fathers that they become more involved and nurturant, that fathers become more available to, and skilled in, handling their children (Pleck, 1984; Parke & Tinsley, 1984). The hope of this latest requested change in the role of the father lies in the realization that this role is embedded in the sociocultural context in which it is found. A lack of support for such a change will, it is postulated, result in the failure to redefine the father's role. This failure in the present, changing sociocultural environment would have developmental implications for infants and children.

The indicated social vulnerability and embeddedness of the father role is important to note. If fathers are to take on a more direct, nurturant, child-cultivating role, it follows that society, its values, supports, and goals must support such a change (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1984; Lamb, 1986; Zigler & Heller, 1984).

### Sociocultural Influences Upon Human Behavior

Human behavior occurs within the context of a bidirectional interaction between the individual and their physical and sociocultural environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Existing social practices, then, may be regarded as influences upon human behavior and as requiring supportive human behavior for their maintenance (Rogoff & Morelli, 1989). Individual behaviors are maintained by existing social structures and institutions which, in turn are sustained by the supportive behavior of individuals in the society (Boudreau, 1986). Behaviors that run counter to those expected in the sociocultural milieu (deviance) meet with punishment or, at the very least, lack of social support (Thomas, 1990). This leaves errant individuals in a position wherein they are likely to experience consequences that urge them toward conformity. Institutional and societal structures, therefore, act as both supportive and conservative influences upon human behavior. These structures rely upon the conformity of individuals for survival and, in turn, exert pressure upon individuals to conform.

Vygotsky (1978) notes that the behavior of individuals is embedded in the interpersonal and institutional contexts of culture. He also notes that patterns of interpersonal relations are organized by institutional conventions. Cross-cultural studies suggest that cultural forces serve to channel development by encouraging, facilitating, or delimiting various behaviors (Laboratory of Cooperative Human Cognition, 1986). Rogoff and Morelli (1989) maintain that psychological processes are "domain specific" and related to sociocultural practices. These acknowledgements of the power and influence of institutional and cultural forces upon human behavior are important to this present study in that the father role seems to be particularly vulnerable to them.

The socialization of fathers, like that of all other people, can be defined as "the complex process by which [they] learn the habits, beliefs, and standards for judgement that make them identifiable members of a group or society" (Boudreau, 1990, p. 64). Socialization results in a certain degree of conformity or similarity. This conformity enables purposeful group behavior. Considering the father's role, it might well be asked "what purposeful group behavior(s) does their typical or traditional role enable and what are the societal contributions of these behaviors?" For example, the father's core role of breadwinning, serves the function of ensuring the provisioning of his family, but also ensures his participation in and dependency upon the broader socioeconomic structure of his society. To provide adequately for his family a father must have the skills and meet the demands of his wider socioeconomic milieu (Cotterell, 1986; Russell, 1983) and be willing to make work a priority in his life (Farley & Werkman, 1986). The priorizing of work above direct family involvement will directly affect the father role by focusing fathers on the external demands of the workplace. The workplace then, requires that large groups of breadwinning fathers conform to the demands that it puts forward. By so heavily influencing the availability and focus of fathers, the workplace penetrates into family relationships and hence, affects the development of children (Cotterell, 1986).

## Socialization and Role Theory

Socialization enables what Boudreau (1990) terms "the critical link between the social environment and individual behavior" (p. 65). Role theory explains this "critical link." Roles are the particular vehicles through which the development of self-concept takes place (Boudreau, 1990). They are learned early in the process of social interaction which in turn is guided by role expectations associated with particular identities (Roggman & Peery, 1989). All roles have social origins that define people in social terms. Some roles are more institutionalized than others, having a higher number of constraints put upon them by the sociocultural order. In North American society, the father role seems to be particularly institutionalized and yet vulnerable to changes in the social environment. Franklin (1988) notes that there is an intimate relationship between men and various social institutions. This relationship may, in part, explain the external, peripheral orientation of men regarding their involvement in nurturant child care activities. In other words, because of their enculturated peripheral role fathers must be socially malleable in order to meet the challenges presented by changes in the sociocultural milieu. This interdependency of fathers and social institutions places demands upon fathers to support the status quo. Being socially vulnerable is guaranteed to generate confusion and stress amoungst fathers (Rogoff & Morelli, 1989).

## Gender Role Identity

The socialization process develops "people products" that can fulfill functions required by the sociocultural milieu in which they will be operating (Boudreau, 1990). Roles may provide individuals with clearly defined scripts or with more unstructured expectations for their behavior. Socialization into roles begins almost from the moment of birth. The cultural ideals of femininity and masculinity are taught early and are transmitted through socialization into appropriate sex roles (Roggman & Peery, 1989). In North American culture gender is an important distinguishing social category. Sex role learning is reinforced by the culture that surrounds it and which is dependent upon these roles for the maintenance of its structures and institutions (Boudreau, 1990).

Examples of sex of rearing overriding biological sex reveal that culture (learning) has a very influential affect upon gender role identity. A dramatic example of this is provided by Money and Ehrhardt (1972). These researchers noted the power of social learning over biological factors. They cite the case of an identical twin boy who, when being circumcized by electrocautery, had his entire penis destroyed. This boy underwent surgical corrections that gave him external female genetalia. He was then, alongside his twin brother, raised as a girl and, evidently, adopted the appropriate gender identity. This child's twin was raised as a boy and developed a sex appropriate gender identity. This gender role learning is reinforced by a culture that uses sex as an important distinguishing social category.

Gender role identity can be defined as a consciousness of sex-specific activities and skills and as an internalization of these activities and skills for oneself (Boudreau, 1990). From birth the sociocultural milieu exposes children to subtle and direct cues which are the basis for sex appropriate behaviors and feelings. Children learn to structure their world around their emerging gender identity. The degree of gender role identity stereotyping in a child depends upon the unity of the information that they receive from their sociocultural environment. The more discrepant the gender information received by the child, the less rigid will be their gender identity. Responses from the environment, then, are crucial and influential in the formation of gender role identity and the maintenance of role performances. During periods of social transition, highly sex-typed socialization may not be desireable or in the best interest of the individual (or society) because, given novel social conditions, characteristics of the type become dysfunctional. The father's role, in order to become more directly nurturant, must be supported by a sociocultural environment that is both requesting father change and supportive of those changes. The present predicament faced by fathers, however, is that requested changes in their involvement with children are not being supported by enculturation and training or supported by social/institutional changes. The slow response of fathers to current demands for increased involvement in child rearing is partially attributable to the dependency of the wider sociocultural environment upon continued father involvement in incompatible activities dictated by that same environment.

## Sociocultural Influences on the Father's Role

The father's role, as aforementioned, is highly vulnerable to the sociocultural milieu, to its social context. If fathers, as a group, are not highly involved in the nurturant cultivation of their children, we can logically postulate that this arrangement suits the sociocultural milieu. Nurturant father involvement, like all human behavior, is highly influenced by several interrelated factors that combine to influence the father's role. Among these are (a) family environment, (b) the skill and knowledge level of fathers, (c) personal characteristics of fathers, (d) the sex-role ideology of both father and mother, (e) the degree of inter-couple support for the idea of higher father participation (Cowan & Cowan, 1984; Tomlinson, 1987), (f) the work schedule flexibility of fathers, and (g) the degree of community support available to families desiring higher father involvement. These interrelated elements will now be discussed individually relative to research findings.

Family Environment. The enculturation of children begins in their own families as the family is the most immediate social environment of the child (Boudreau, 1990; Thomas, 1990). Boudreau (1990) notes that children are highly influenced by their parents, who are "the primary source of early sex role socialization" (p. 74). The influence of this early environment is amplified by factors such as the dependency of children, their lack of experience, and the restricted range of their interpersonal and situational options. Parents influence children with their own sex-typed expectations which, of course, are influenced by current sociocultural norms and the socialization experiences of the parents themselves.

Fathers grow up in families and experience social training via role expectations, modelling, and relationships with their own parents. There is some indication that fathers are motivated to become involved with their own children by one of two primary factors: (a) the lack of involvement of their own fathers (Radin, 1985; Russell, 1985) or (b) because of the high involvement modelled by their own fathers (Sagi, 1982). The socialization of mothers is also important in that they have been shown to be influential in regulating both the type and quality of paternal involvement (Lamb, 1986). It must be remembered that mothers have also been enculturated to not be employed and to be primary caregivers (Lamb, 1986).

The Enculturation of males. North American society primarily still prepares mothers for parenthood and limits the opportunities of fathers to acquire basic child-rearing skills (Cohen, 1987; Russell, 1983). Clarke-Stewart (1977) points out that fathers require social support in order to become more actively involved in nurturant child care. Examples of this support would be the removal of the biased, sex-based training for child care involvement that so emphatically excludes males in the enculturation process, or the provision of paternity leave options by employers. The perpetuation of skill deficits in fathers presents another problem in that social training and expectations for men heavily emphasizes competence (Hsu, 1983). Asking fathers to engage in active child-rearing without training would mean demonstrating incompetence, which might be expected to meet with resistance or retreat to areas of traditional and personal competence. The social expectation that mothers will rear their children enables men to withdraw from this area of involvment without the censure that mothers would receive (Lamb, 1986).

Personal Characteristics. Given that the past sociocultural environment has not supported nurturant father involvement (Clarke-Stewart, 1977; Franklin, 1988), and consequently, that it does not offer males caregiving role models (Lamb, 1986), it follows that certain personal characteristics of the father would be found amongst fathers involved in nurturant child care. One variable found to be important in this regard is that of self-esteem (Coysh, 1983). Fathers with high self-esteem and who value independent thinking have been found to be highly represented amongst fathers who have adopted a more bnurturant non-traditional style with their children (Russell, 1983; Shamir, 1986).

A hypothesis that has received mixed support is that nurturant fathers are likely to be 'androgynous', to support both traditional male and female characteristics. Russell (1983a) supports this hypothesis while McHale and Huston

(1984) and Radin (1982) have found contrary results. An interesting study in this area would be to attempt to isolate other variables that enable these men to develop the above enabling characteristics in spite of an unsupportive sociocultural environment.

Sex role Ideology. What a father or a couple believe about their sex-role ideology (e.g., egalitarian, traditional) highly influences the degree of father involvement (Kimball, 1984; Pleck, 1983). Parental beliefs about the competence of fathers to nurture their young also influences the extent of father involvement in nurturant child rearing. Russell (1983a) in a survey of traditional families, found a strong belief in a maternal instinct and in a lack of paternal ability to nurture. Results from non-traditional families indicated that this group had a much stronger belief in the ability of fathers to be competent caregivers. The degree of identity with traditional ideas about breadwinning and work is also an important factor influencing father involvment (Radin, 1985). Adoption of the traditional role of the father as sole or primary breadwinner seems to be imcompatible with the goal of increased, nurturant father caregiving (Cotterell, 1986). Fathers who are less career and work oriented are less likely to be restricted in their opportunities to become more salient as nurturers of their children (Kimball, 1984).

Support of Spouse. The support of fathers by mothers is a central influence in the achievement of increased father participation (Barnett & Baruch, 1984). When mothers have an egalitarian view of parenting, fathers are more involved with the care of their children (McHale & Huston, 1984). While the mother's support of a non-traditional role in her husband is important, the father's support of his spouse in the non-traditional domain of career involvement is also important. This mutual support increases the marital satisfaction of both spouses (Radin, 1985). Thus, an egalitarian approach involves each spouse being able to accept and support their mate in establishing expertise in a non-traditional domain (child-rearing for fathers and career or paid employment for mothers). This mutually supportive arrangement has been found to be crucial in the development of satisfying marital relations (Russell, 1983).

Influences of Paid Work. Given the centrality of paid work in the lives of fathers, it is no surprise that father availability is highly influenced by the demands of the working environment. Cotterell (1986) describes what he calls "the intrusion of work patterns into family life" (p. 362). The realities of the work place greatly influence the nurturant opportunities of fathers by determining that they will be away from their children for large blocks of time, or for shifts that clash with family life. The demands of the workplace can cause stress in the home environment

(Bronfenbrenner, Moen, & Garbarino, 1984).

Pleck (1985) found that a large difference between father and mother involvement in child care was not totally accounted for by the amount of time men spent in paid work. This interesting and somewhat counter-intuitive finding implicates four other interrelated factors that are subject to sociocultural influences. These are: motivation, skill level, social supports, and institutional barriers (Pleck, Lamb, & Levine, 1985). These factors accounted for as much of the variation in men's involvement in child care as did their paid work (Pleck, 1985). These findings implicate not only the influence of paid work, but also the action of other sociocultural features in the development and expression of nurturant father behaviors. The finding by Pleck (1983) that fathers spend most of their non-work time in activities unrelated to child rearing (as opposed to mothers, who spend most of their non-work time involved in child rearing) supports the supposition that father involvement is influenced by other sociocultural factors.

Degree of Community Support. The supports available in a father's community are influential in helping fathers become nurturantly involved with their children (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1984). Because of the sociocultural innovation implied by the goal of increased father involvement, Russell (1986) postulates that increased home centered father involvement in child rearing would lead to the isolation of fathers because of a lack of supports being in place for them in this novel role. The novel involvement of fathers in social domains formerly not prescribed for them is likely to meet with such resistance until true and lasting changes have occured in the sociocultural structure.

## Summary

In spite of a large body of evidence supporting the contention that fathers are capable of performing a wide range of caregiving activities (Lamb, 1977; Parke and Power, 1982), fathers require social support to become successfully involved in these activities. This is the case for several reasons. Amoung these reasons are: the lack of definition and articulation of the expectations for father involvement in direct child rearing; the lack of prepatory socialization (enculturation) provided to males in the area of nurturant parenting; and the dependency of fathers upon the support of their spouses. Dickie and Matheson (1984) found that spousal support was more strongly correlated with father involvement than it was to mother involvement. This may indicate that fathers are, as a group, not as highly socialized as mothers to take on the task of nurturant child rearing.

There is an intimate relationship between individuals and the sociocultural environment in which they live (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, the conclusion that the paucity of nurturant fathering evident in our culture has a sociocultural basis, seems to be supported by the developmental and sociological literature pertaining to the father's role (potential and actual) in child development. The nurturant participation of fathers cannot be meaningfully studied outside of the sociocultural contexts that surround fathers. The variables affecting this role are intimately intertwined with the wider sociocultural structures and goals that make it unique. The father's role, because of its traditional elements of provisioning and protection, is an externally oriented one. To provision and protect, fathers must deal with the vicissitudes of the sociocultural environment. This means that the father's role is vulnerable to changes in this environment. There are consequences that stem directly from this vulnerability. The sociocultural environment requires that the father's role be flexible (vulnerable) in order to accomodate the needs of the wider socioeonomic conditions/environment. The demands of this wider environment are often counter-developmental for fathers, families, and children. Traditionally, fathers have not been involved in the direct, nurturant care of their children because they have been required by the sociocultural environment to be involved in activities that have served to maintain other features of this environment. It is to a consideration of these "other features" and the father's intimate relationship to them that this study now turns.

# CHAPTER 6

## Summary and Conclusions

The findings of this study and their implications are presented in the following section. The limitations and implications of past research efforts are also mentioned and directions for future research are discussed.

### Limitations of the Study

The study is limited because it did not investigate the question of the sociocultural influences on nurturant fathering empirically. This has meant that reliance upon extant research in the areas of child development and sociology has been extensive. Because of the breadth of this material, its synthesis may not be as tight as the author would desire it to be. Also, the breadth of this question and its vulnerability to ideological interpretations makes it especially subject to the selective biases of the author. Although attempts have been made to control for these biases, the author cautions the reader that the reporting and conclusions of this study may be so biased.

### Social Factors and Father Salience

It seems evident that children require nurturance in order to optimally develop their psychosocial potentials. Also indicated in the proceeding chapters is that there is some reason to suspect that children in North America are, as a group, at risk for being under nurtured by a sociocultural environment that is in flux, and that has not made the development of children a high priority. The family, traditionally regarded as the primary environment of socialization and nuturance, is in a state of transition. Also, the integrity of the family is being insufficiently supported by society, given the stress generated by this state of transition.

Fathers have the potential to be highly salient in the cultivation of child potential. They are, as a group, however, not being enculturated to take on a direct, child rearing role with their children. As a result, they lack the skills and confidence to take on this novel role. The close tie between men and social institutions generates a conservative force that supports the outcomes of the traditional enculturation of men, thus perpetuating their distance from the direct nurturance of their children (Franklin, 1988). This close tie also makes the father role exceptionally vulnerable to changes in the sociocultural environment. This predicament creates expectations for fathers to maintain the old order and to be flexible in the face of social change. It can be postulated that this social reality has placed fathers in a tense and confusing position.

The Women's Movement, or Egalitarian Movement, has called attention to social role inequities delineated by gender. One of the most glaring of these inequities is evident when comparisons are made between the genders in the area of child rearing, where mothers remain preeminent. This traditional inequity is perpetuated by two primary, interrelated sociocultural variables: enculturation and existing institutions and practices. An example of this is the father's traditional involvement in paid work. Galvanized to the function of breadwinning, enculturated fathers are peripherally oriented and prepared to deal with existing social structures and practices. This requires that men become closely involved with social institutions. This intimacy, in turn, dictates that the father role is vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the socioeconomic milieu surrounding paid work. Male adaptability to these vicissitudes is something that the sociocultural environment demands of males. These demands correspond to the enculturation outcomes that the sociocultural environment requires for its maintenance. They also run counter to the goal of increased father involvement.

### Research Barriers

The investigation of the contributions of fathers to the cultivation of the psychosocial potentials of children has been hindered by the comparative absence of fathers in such a capacity and by a variety of social and research based barriers. For example, father-absence studies, because of their dyadic cause and effect approach and interpretation, failed to demonstrate the social complexity and dependency of the father's role. However, a retrospective look at the results of these studies (from an ecological point of view) reveals that father absence can disrupt the sociodevelopmental ecology of the family, thereby compromising potential sources of developmental support and influence. Fathers do not act with their children in isolation but rather as part of a complex, interrelated sociocultural environment.

Another barrier involved interpreting the existing gender-based division of labor as reflecting a natural, biologically based order. From this point of view, the realities of pregnancy, childbirth, breast feeding, and prolonged infant dependency served initially to place mothers in a child-focused role and required of fathers that they deal with peripheral matters. Sexual dimorphism, then, initially channelled parents into distinctive gender roles and then role ascriptions were socially constructed and given credence by the belief that they had a phylogenetic basis. In fact, there is little evidence to support the contention that mothers are inherently better equipped than fathers to socialize their infants. This gender-based role division is maintained by sociocultural factors.

### Sociocultural Influences

Recent social changes have prompted researchers to investigate the contributions of fathers to child development from a new perspective. This change of focus is an example of how research questions are shaped by the sociocultural environment of the researchers investigating the question. The realities of hard economic times, working mothers, the changing structure of the family, and the egalitarian movement have combined to enable researchers to investigate the father's role in child development in the context of other, interrelated sociocultural variables. This novel, contextual approach to the research of the father's role in child development has revealed that fathers are capable of providing nurturant caregiving to infants and that the quality and extent of their involvement in such activities is dependent upon a variety of sociocultural factors. While the biobehavioral potential of fathers includes the capacities required for child nurturance, the demonstration of these potentials requires a supportive sociocultural environment. If fathers have been historically absent from the direct, nurturant care of their children, it is not due to a lack of inherent capacities. The father's intimate relationship with the sociocultural environment does not support his direct involvement in child nurturance and must be cited as a major reason for a consistently observed lack of involvement by fathers in this area.

### Developmental Implications

There are indications that the absence of fathers from a nurturing role with their children has developmental consequences for fathers, children, mothers, and society.

An enculturated gender role identity that does not include child nurturance in its list of outcomes directs men away from such activities. Consequently, men do not acquire the skills or confidence to engage in child rearing activities, children are bereft of direct father nurturance, and mothers (or surrogates) are left with the majority of child care responsibilities. Combined with the social expectation that men should be confident and competent, the lack of father preparation for nurturant child care acts as an impediment to father involvement in child nurturing activities. Fathers in our culture will not, it is assumed, be willing to display incompetence, especially in a domain that their enculturation has prepared them to regard as unmasculine.

It seems clear, then, that there is a strong cultural basis to the differences observed in the nurturing behaviors of fathers and mothers. Although there is a biological basis for nurturant fathering behavior (Lamb et al., 1987; Rypma, 1976) research has demonstrated that these potentials are highly subject to the sociocultural environment for their development and expression. Fathers are able to nurture their children. Whether they are directly involved in this nurturing is, however, highly influenced by the sociocultural milieu in which they live.

The father's intimate relationship with the social environment peripheral to the family is the product of a long history of father involvement in protective and provisioning functions. It can be postulated that the social structures and institutions reflect this intimacy and act to perpetuate father involvement with the peripheral social environment. To ensure a continued supply of men who are willing and able to meet the demands of this environment, males must be enculturated to accept these demands. In this way it can be seen that there is an intimate relationship between the forces of enculturation and the demands of the structures and institutions of society.

If direct nurturant fathering is to become more widespread in our society, two prerequisite conditions must be achieved. These are: supportive changes in the socioinstitutional structure at all levels and corresponding changes in the enculturation goals for both males and females. Present enculturation goals fit the demands of the present socioinstitutional structure and this could help explain the general lack of support for increased participation by fathers in nurturant child rearing. In essence, because of the father's intimate relationship with social institutions, it may be postulated that father distance from the direct nurturance of his children is institutionalized. That is to say, father distance from the nurturing role is prescribed and maintained by social expectations, structures, and institutions. Father participation in child rearing has been found to be highly correlated with the degree of support received by the father for such participation. Sources of this support are spousal, peer, community, work place, and wider society. All these influences are, of course, subject to the influence of the sociocultural environment. Also, qualities found in fathers themselves have been noted to influence the degree and quality of father involvement. Important influences here are the father's self-esteem, enculturation, personality, and temperment. These father qualities are in bi-directional interaction with sociocultural variables and with infant characteristics.

Indications are that, although identified as a current social goal, direct nurturant fatherhood is making slow progress toward becoming the norm in North American society. This slow progress has been found to be the result of sociocultural factors such as the enculturation of men and women (gender role identity), a lack of institutional support, and the demands of the workplace. These sociocultural elements are interrelated and mutually supportive. They act to slow progress toward a more pervasive father presence in direct child nurturance.

## Influential Factors

The focus of this study has been upon the influence of sociocultural factors on the development and expression of nurturant fathering behaviors. By understanding the role that these features play in the development of nurturant fathering, they can be modified in ways that facilitate the cultivation of nurturance in present and future fathers. The identification and modification of delimiting sociocultural factors would seem to be of particular importance given that society is requesting of fathers that they become more involved in the direct rearing of their children. The modal approach to fathering in North America today does not involve an equal sharing of responsibility (with mothers) for the day-to-day care of children. To become more nurturantly involved fathers will require the supportive change of identified aspects of the sociocultiral milieu. Amoung these aspects are mothers, community support, social policies, and fathers themselves.

Mothers. The degree of father involvement in the increased, nurturant care of children is highly influenced by their spouses. Mothers act as regulators or "gate keepers" to father involvement. This is so because of the preeminence of mothers in child rearing, their enculturation, and the social expectation that they are involved in such activities. Increased father involvement can be either a blessing or a threat to mothers depending upon the particulars of their own enculturation and gender role identity. The continued over-representation of women in the role of primary care giver is an indication that the products of enculturation and their institutional correlates are slow to change. This situation may be generating some of the tension that is evident in many contemporary marriages.

The increased and novel involvement of fathers in the domain of direct child rearing has the potential to enable mothers to become involved in social domains that have traditionally been denied them. For both fathers and mothers to achieve more satisfying levels of involvement in family and social arenas will require the mutual support of spouses and, ideally, mutually compatible gender role identities. For mothers to support the increased involvement of fathers in nurturant child care, they must be willing to allow fathers to take on child rearing duties. They must also be able to encourage the efforts of fathers in the domain of nurturant child care, being mindful that fathers are enculturated to demonstrate competence and that not doing so is aversive to them. Being supported in this way will facilitate fathers in acquiring the skills that will eventually enable them to be more competent.

Community Support. Increased father involvement in child rearing is related to the amount of support available to fathers in their immediate communities. Father satisfaction with the nurturant parent role was highest when peer and community support was available to them. Peer support is especially potent in this regard. As there is a strong negative relationship between involvement in direct nurturant fathering and traditional enculturation outcomes for males, it might be assumed that widespread peer support would be found in select communities, which has been found to be the case. Communities can offer fathers support in terms of the resources that they make available to them that facilitate father growth and involvement with their infants. Examples would be, father support and growth groups, the availability of nurturant father role models, and flexible work scheduling amoungst the community's employers.

Social Policies. The knowledge that children require nurturance to develop and that they are increasingly at risk for not receiving this nurturance has been slow to transfer into legislation and policy initiatives at all levels of government. Because of the long history in psychology of regarding fathers as developmentally unimportant to their children, there has been a lack of policy development positively affecting father involvement with children. This is of particular concern given the father's extraordinary dependency upon the support of policies and practices, and the intimate relationship that exists between males and social institutions. If institutional policies and practices are not supportive of father involvement in child rearing, it follows that fathers will be absent in this area.

Impressing upon policy makers the importance of generating developmentally sensitive policies would seem to be important given the father's demonstrated need for such support. To facilitate this process, policy makers should align themselves with current developmental researchers. Also, policy-makers should be open and available to receive feedback from those for whom their policies are designed. Because of the strong identification and involvement of fathers in paid work, policies that offered flexibility in work schedules, job sharing options, and paternity leaves, would be of particular use to fathers. In general, policies that enabled fathers to be regularly involved with their children on a long term basis, that decreased father isolation, and that increased social supports could pave the way for more extensive father involvement in nurturant child care activities.

Fathers. The traditional emotional remoteness from their children and others has been identified as a factor detrimental to father health (Hsu, 1983; Jourard, 1969). Increased father involvement in the nurturant care of their children generates potential benefits for fathers in the area of personal growth and development. Nurturantly involved fathers consistently report that they experience satisfaction in their home lives and experience a sense of fulfillment. The removal of sociocultural barriers to increased father involvement in child rearing and establishing such involvement as a legitimate area of father participation could potentially be of benefit to fathers. This will involve men actively challenging their own enculturation and raising their collective awareness of related issues by such means as participation in men's issues groups. More widespread father involvement in the nurturance of children will only be achieved if men are willing to take risks, explore issues, and receive support for doing so.

Since policy decisions are generally politically motivated, it might be assumed that they would reflect reigning values, beliefs, or the status quo. A problem arises when these guiding values and beliefs are counter-developmental or based upon short-term political or economic goals. An awareness of the effects of sociocultural factors on the father's role, in particular upon the development and expression of father nurturance, can serve to sensitize policy makers to the need to support fathers in this crucial period of transition for the father role.

## Directions for Future Research

This study has revealed that there is a complex relationship between the father role and the sociocultural environment, in the context of which this role is enacted. The acknowledgement of this interrelationship of variables opens doors to the investigation of a wide variety of questions related to social influences upon behavior. Amoung these are:

1. There is a need to conduct more research in the

area of sociocultural influences upon human behavior. In particular, specific demonstrations of the close tie between the father role and social structures and institutions would be of interest.

2. With regard to the nature of the child, it would be of interest to investigate the reasons for reported differences between children separated from their fathers by divorce or dessertion and children who lose their fathers through death.

3. Further investigation of the etiology of the personal and social characteristics of men who manage to be involved in the nurturant rearing of their children in the face of a primarily unsupportive social environment could be of value by indicating variables important to the achievement of nurturant fathering.

4. A study investigating the influence of the changing father role upon the role of mothers would be an interesting way to demonstrate the interrelationship of social roles.

5. Also of interest would be investigating the affect of father nurturance on the total nurturing available to children.

6. It would also be of use to demonstrate how research questions and conclusions are shaped and interpreted by the zeitgeist and the sociopolitical environment.

7. The social vulnerablility of the father role is foreshadowed in the relative vulnerability of boys, who

demonstrate a variety of difficulties that seem to be related to their enculturation (preparation for fatherhood).

## Summary

Identification of the sociocultural forces that adversely impact the development and expression of nurturant fathering is important. This knowledge should be useful in facilitating the development of social policies and practices that are better able to help families provide nurturant care to their infants and children. The father role is very vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the sociocultural environment. As such, fathers will require the support of this environment to enable increased father involvement and to develop a gender role identity compatible with this novel father function.

Our society is in flux, causing families and individuals to dance a jig to pipers that seemingly do not have the development of children as a high thematic or fiscal priority. Once again fathers are being requested to accomodate to a changing sociocultural environment. And while this can be disruptive, it also enables the examination of the forces that are operating to remove human beings from opportunities to both give and receive nurturance. Moderating the present demand for social change with knowledge of the developmental requirements of children could result in social conditions that cultivate the potentials of children. Present social structures and enculturation practices, however, are not based upon such considerations. As fathers are increasingly being viewed as potential sources of nurturance to their children, they will require the support of their society and will need to be encouraged and enculturated to regard the direct nurturance of their children as a legitimate activity of fatherhood.

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